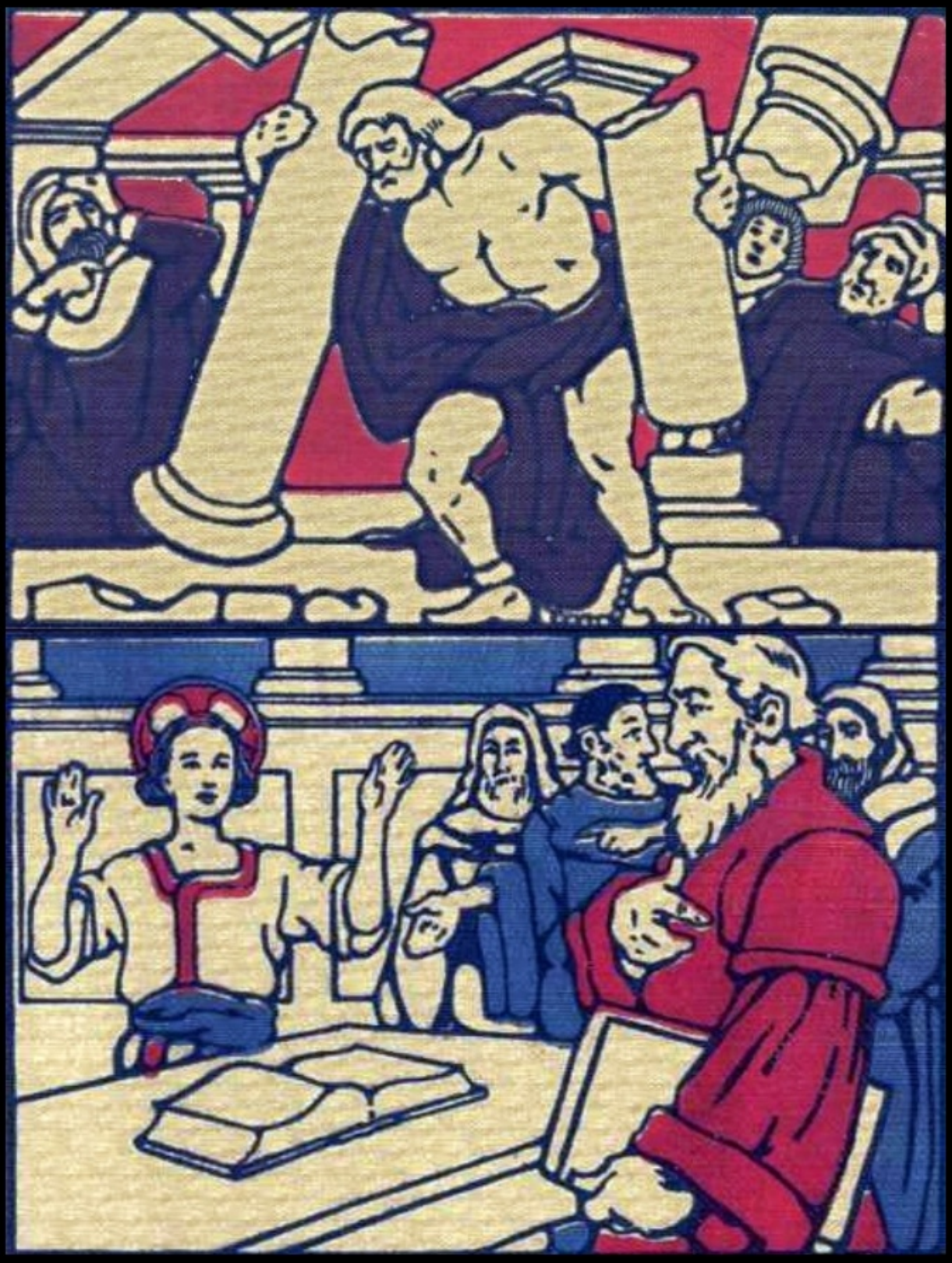
Mother Stories from the Bible



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Mother Stories from the Bible

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Mother Stories from the Old Testament

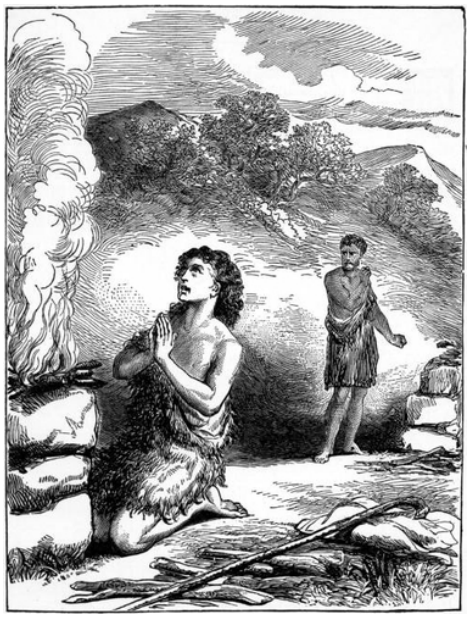
Adam and Eve

In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth He also made the sun, moon, and stars; trees, flowers, and all vegetable life; and all animals, birds, fishes, and insects. Then God made man. The name of the first man was Adam, and the first woman was Eve. Both were placed in a beautiful garden called the Garden of Eden, where they might have been happy continually had they not sinned. But God forbade them to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted Eve to take the fruit of this tree. She ate, and gave to Adam, and he ate also. Thus they sinned, and sin came into the world.

Then God called to Adam and said, "Where art thou?" Before this, Adam and Eve had been happy when God was near, now they were afraid. Why? Because they knew they had done wrong. So sin makes us afraid of God.

God rebuked them for the evil they had done; and then drove them out of the Garden of Eden, placing an angel to keep watch over the gate so that they could not return.

Cain and Abel



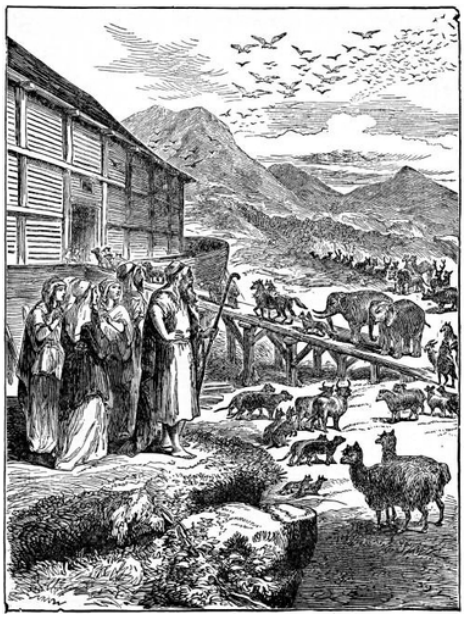
What a sad story the Bible tells us in the fourth chapter of Genesis! Cain and Abel were brothers, the sons of Adam and Eve. How they should have loved each other! Yet we find that Cain killed Abel. Why did he do this?

Cain was a husbandman, who tilled the ground; Abel was a shepherd, who kept sheep. One day each offered a sacrifice to God. Cain brought fruit, and Abel brought a lamb. God accepted Abel's offering, but not Cain's. Why? Well, I am not quite sure, but I think it was because Abel offered his sacrifice according as God had commanded, and had faith in a promised Saviour; but Cain simply acknowledged God's goodness in giving him the fruits of the earth. God had probably told them, too, that when they came to worship Him, they were to bring a lamb or a kid as a sacrifice for their sins; this Abel had done, but Cain had not. Cain was angry because God had accepted Abel's offering and not his; and he hated his brother Abel.

God knew the evil thought Cain had towards his brother, and asked him, "Why art thou wroth?" and said, "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?" But Cain did still more wickedly. When out in the field he killed his brother. Was it not a cruel deed? They were alone when this murder was committed, yet one eye saw it all. God saw it, and said to Cain: "Where is Abel, thy brother?" We cannot sin without God knowing it! Cain told God a lie. He answered, "I know

not." But he did know. God was angry with Cain for his sin, and sent him as a fugitive and vagabond to wander on the earth.

The Flood



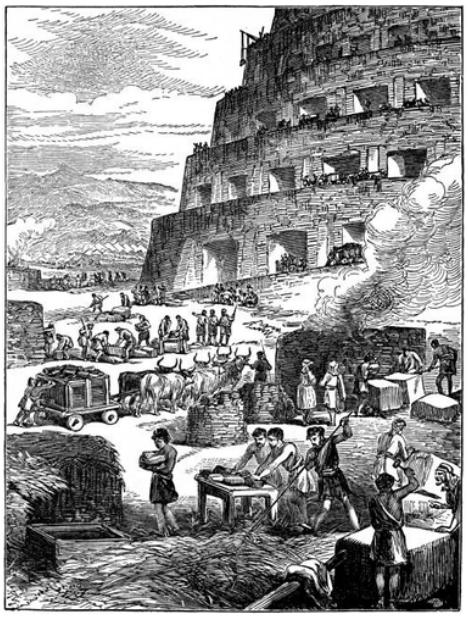
About fifteen hundred years had passed since Cain slew Abel, during which time man had become more and more wicked. At length God saw "that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." Then God said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth."

But one man was righteous and served God. His name was Noah. God told him that the world would be drowned by a flood because of the wickedness of the people, and commanded him to build a great ark to float upon the waters. In this ark God promised to preserve alive Noah and his family; and also two of each of every living thing on the earth - animals, birds, and creeping things. All the rest were to die.

Noah built the ark as God commanded. It took him a great many years, during which time the people were warned to forsake their sins and turn to God, but they did not do so. At last the ark was finished, and Noah, with his wife, and his sons with their wives, and the animals, birds, and creeping things, as God had commanded, all entered into it. What a long procession it must have been! Then God shut them in, and they dwelt in safety while the rain came down, and the waters rose up and covered the earth. All were drowned except those in the ark.

A year afterwards, when the waters were dried up, Noah, and all that had been with him, left the ark. Then Noah built an altar, and offered sacrifices to God, in thankfulness for God's goodness to him and his family.

The Tower of Babel



Babel means confusion. Was it not a strange name to give a tower? How did it get this?

After Noah left the ark, God made a promise to him that He would no more destroy the earth by a flood, and blessed him and his sons. In course of time many little children were born, baby boys and girls, who grew up to be fathers and mothers having children also. In this manner a great many people dwelt again on the earth. For more than one hundred years they all spoke the same language, and as, in course of time, they journeyed onward, they came to a large plain in the land of Shinar, near to where Babylon was afterwards built. Here they said they would remain and build a great city, with a high tower ascending to heaven.

Now God, when he blessed Noah, had said to him, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth;" meaning that the people were to scatter abroad, so that the world might become inhabited again. But these men wanted to keep together, and found one great empire, the centre of which should be the great city with the lofty tower. So they made bricks and burnt them, and took a kind of pitch for mortar, and began to build. Some learned men say they took three years in getting the materials, and were twenty-two years building the tower. It was very great and high, but it was never finished. The people did wickedly in building it, and God, who saw all they were doing, confounded their

language, so that one could not understand another. Thus they left off building the tower, and that is why it is called Babel. Then God scattered them abroad to re-people the earth.

Lot's Flight from Sodom

In Palestine, the land in which Jesus dwelt when He was upon earth, there is an inland sea, called the Dead Sea. Its waters are very salt, and no trees grow upon its shores. Many long years before the birth of Jesus Christ, two cities stood upon the plain which the waters of the Dead Sea now cover. These cities were named Sodom and Gomorrah. Their inhabitants were very wicked, so God destroyed their cities by raining brimstone and fire upon them.

Before God destroyed these cities, He sent two angels to Lot, Abraham's nephew, who dwelt in Sodom, commanding him to flee from it, taking his family with him. The angels hastened him, saying, "Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city." Then the angels took all four by the hand and led them out, and said to Lot, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."

Lot pleaded that he might take refuge in a little city, named Zoar, not very far distant; and having obtained the angels' permission to do so, he took his wife and daughters, and hastened away. In our picture we see him and his daughters entering Zoar, and Sodom burning in the distance - but what is that strange figure standing on the plain? Alas! that is Lot's wife; the angel had commanded them that none were

to look back, but she did so, and was turned into a pillar of salt.

Lot did wrong in dwelling in such a wicked city as Sodom, and lost all his property when he escaped for his life.

Abraham and Isaac

Abraham feared God and obeyed His commandments; and God promised to bless Abraham very greatly. He gave him riches in cattle, and silver, and gold; and said that the land of Canaan should belong to him and his descendants. God also gave him a son in his old age, whom he loved, very dearly and named Isaac. But God intended to try Abraham, to see if he loved Him above all else.

One day God told Abraham to take his son Isaac, and to journey into the land of Moriah; there to build an altar and offer Isaac as a sacrifice upon it. It was a strange command, but Abraham knew that God would not bid him do what was wrong, and believed that even if he slew his son, God was able to raise him to life again. So he rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, took two of his young men, and wood for the fire; and then, accompanied by Isaac, started on his journey. On the third day they came near the place God had pointed out, and Abraham left the young men with the ass, while he and his son journeyed up the mountain alone. As they went along, Isaac - who carried the wood, while his father carried the knife and the fire, said: "My father." And Abraham replied, "Here am I, my son." Then Isaac said: "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham answered: "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."

The altar was built, Isaac was bound and laid upon it, and Abraham's arm was uplifted to strike the blow that was to

take his son's life away. Then God called to Abraham, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing that thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." Abraham looked up, and behind him saw a ram which was caught in a thicket by its horns; this he took and offered as a sacrifice to God.

So God tried Abraham; and also Himself provided the lamb for the burnt offering, as Abraham had said.

The Story of Rebekah

When Abraham had grown old, he desired that his son, Isaac, should take a wife. But he did not wish him to choose one from among the women of Canaan, for they worshipped idols. So he called his oldest servant, and commanded him to make a journey to Abraham's own country, and there to choose a wife for Isaac. Then the man took ten camels, together with food and other goods for the journey, and set out for the city of Nahor. When he came to the walls of the city he spied a well, and, as it was evening, the young women were coming out to draw water. Then he asked God to help him to choose a wife for Isaac, saying, "Let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink,' and who shall reply, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also;' let her be the one Thou hast chosen for Thy servant Isaac."

Before he had done speaking, there came out a beautiful young woman, whose name was Rebekah. She was the grand-daughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother. She carried a pitcher upon her shoulder, and went down to the well and filled it. Then Abraham's servant ran to her and asked her for a drink from her pitcher. She said, "Drink, my lord," and held the pitcher for him, and afterwards drew water for his camels also. Then he took a golden jewel and a pair of gold bracelets, and put them upon her, and asked whose daughter she was, and if her father could lodge him and his company. When she told him who she was, he was glad, and

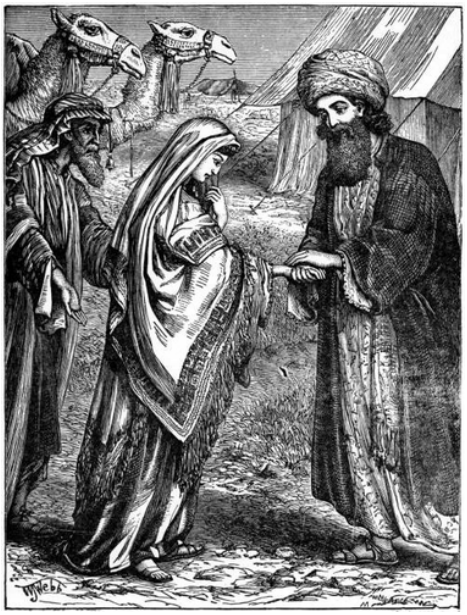
worshipped God, for he was sure then that he had been led to the house of Abraham's brother.

Then Rebekah called out her friends, and they took the man in to lodge him for the night, and set food before him. But he would not eat until he had told them his errand, and how he believed God had chosen Rebekah for Isaac's wife. He then asked the parents to say whether they would give their daughter or not, but they said: "It has been ordered by God; we cannot give or refuse her. Rebekah is before you. Take her and go. Let her be Isaac's wife, as the Lord hath spoken."

When the man heard these words, he again praised God, and then he brought out rich clothing, and jewels of gold and silver, and gave them to Rebekah. He also gave presents to her mother and brother. When they asked Rebekah if she would go with the man, she said "Yes," and took leave of her friends, who blessed her. Then, with her nurse and her maids, she rode upon the camels, and followed the man, for she believed that so God had ordered it.

Isaac dwelt by the well Lahai-roi, and one evening he walked into the fields to meditate. As he lifted up his eyes he saw the company of camels coming towards him. At the same time, Rebekah lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. When the man told her it was his master Isaac, she alighted from the camel, and covered her face with a veil, according to the custom of the East. When the man told Isaac all he had done, Isaac was pleased, and welcomed Rebekah, and gave

her the tent that had been his mother's. And she became his wife.



Joseph and His Brethren

How wonderful is the way in which God works for those who fear Him! The history of Joseph teaches us this truth.

Joseph had one younger and ten elder brothers. The name of the younger brother was Benjamin. Jacob was the father of them all; and Rachel was the mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Jacob loved Joseph more than all his other sons, and made him a coat of many colours; but his elder brothers hated him, and one day, when far away from home, proposed to kill him. They cast him into a pit instead, and afterwards sold him as a slave to some merchants who were travelling from Gilead to Egypt. When they returned to their father, they took Joseph's coat of many colours, which they had dipped in blood, and brought it to Jacob, saying: "This have we found: know now if it be thy son's coat or no." Jacob knew the coat; and thought Joseph had been killed by some wild beast, and mourned for him greatly.

The merchants carried Joseph into Egypt, and sold him to one of the king's officers, named Potiphar. But, though a slave, he was not forsaken by God. No, God was with him, and made all that he did to prosper. His master placed him over all his house, but his mistress wanted him to commit a great sin. When he refused, she accused him unjustly to his master, and Potiphar had him cast into prison.

God was with Joseph in the prison, and gave him such favour with the keeper that he set him over all the other prisoners.

Among them were two; one who had been the king's butler, and the other his baker. Both had dreams which troubled them much, but Joseph was enabled by God to interpret their dreams for them. By-and-by Pharaoh, the king, dreamed a dream. He was standing on the banks of a river, and saw seven fat cows come up out of the water and feed in a meadow; afterwards seven very lean cows came up and devoured the fat ones. Then Pharaoh awoke; but he dreamed again, and saw that seven very poor ears of corn devoured seven that were full and good. In the morning he was greatly troubled. What could the dreams mean? He called for the magicians and the wise men, but they could not tell. At last it was told him how Joseph had interpreted the dreams in the prison; so he sent for Joseph, who came from the prison, and stood before the king.

Pharaoh said, "I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it; and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it." Joseph answered, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace." Then Joseph told Pharaoh that the dreams had been sent by God, to show him that after seven years of great plenty had passed there would come seven years of famine. He also advised Pharaoh to lay up corn in cities during the years of plenty, so that the people might be fed during the years of famine. Pharaoh saw what great wisdom God had given Joseph, and made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. The corn was stored up; and after the years of plenty the famine came.

During all this time Jacob and his sons had been dwelling in Canaan; where, through the famine, they were now in want of food. So Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to buy corn. The Bible tells us, in the book of Genesis, how they came to Egypt, and all that befell them there; and how at last Joseph, the ruler of the mighty kingdom, made himself known to them as the brother they had cruelly sold for a slave. But he forgave them, and sent to fetch his father Jacob, saying that all were to come into Egypt, where he would provide for them.

Jacob could not at first believe the good news his sons brought; but when he saw the wagons which Joseph had sent to carry him and the little ones, he said, "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." So he journeyed to Egypt, with his sons, and all that he had; and as he drew near Joseph went to meet him. When Joseph met his father, he fell on his neck, and wept there. And Jacob said, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive." He was so full of joy that it seemed to him there was nothing else worth living for. Afterwards Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh; and Jacob blessed Pharaoh; who allowed him and his family to dwell in the land of Goshen.

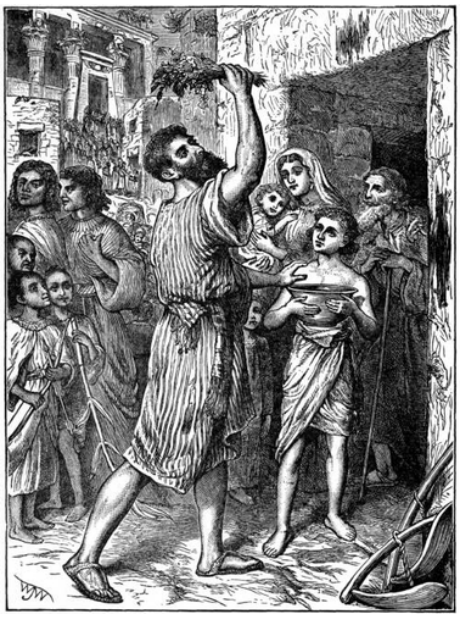
The Finding of Moses

Pharoah, becoming alarmed at the increasing power and numbers of the Israelites in Egypt, ordered that every male child who might be born to them should be cast into the river, and drowned. But the wife of a man named Levi felt that she could not give up her babe, and for three months she hid him. When she could hide him no longer, she prepared a basket of rushes, and coated it with pitch, so that it would float upon the river and keep out the water. In this ark she placed her infant son, and hid the ark among the flags and bulrushes on the river-bank, and set the child's sister to watch it.

Now it happened that the daughter of Pharaoh came with her maidens to bathe in the river; and when she saw the basket she sent one of her maids to fetch it. And when she looked at the child he wept, and she had compassion for him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children." Then the child's sister came forward and said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I call to thee a Hebrew woman that she may nurse the child for thee?" And when the princess said, "Go! " she, the maid, went and called her own mother, to whom Pharaoh's daughter said, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will give thee thy wages." And the woman took the child and nursed him. And when he had grown, his mother took him to the princess, who adopted him as her son, and called his name Moses, which means drawn out, because she took him from the water. Afterwards he grew to be a great

man: he was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and we are told, "he was mighty in words and deeds."

The Flight from Egypt



When Moses was forty years old he had to flee from Egypt. He went to Midian, where he dwelt for forty years; at the end of which time God appeared to him, and instructed him to return to Egypt; where he was appointed by God to lead the Israelites from bondage to the land of Canaan. Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and delivered to him God's command to let the people of Israel go; telling him that if he disobeyed terrible plagues would come upon his land. Pharaoh hardened his heart against God, and refused to let the people go; so ten dreadful plagues were sent, the last of which was that the firstborn of every Egyptian should die, whether it were man or beast. But not a single Israelite was to suffer harm. This plague God said should come in the night; when an angel would pass through the land, destroying the Egyptians but sparing the Israelites.

Each family of the Israelites was commanded, on the evening that God had appointed, to kill a lamb, and to dip a bunch of hyssop in its blood, sprinkling this blood upon the top and side posts of the door. All the houses thus marked God said would be spared when the destroying angel passed through the land. In the night, while the Israelites were, according to God's command, eating the lambs that had been slain, all ready to depart, a great cry arose among the Egyptians. In every house, from the palace downwards, the eldest child lay dead.

Then the Egyptians arose, and thrust the Israelites out; and they left Egypt, and journeyed towards the Red Sea.

Moses Striking the Rock

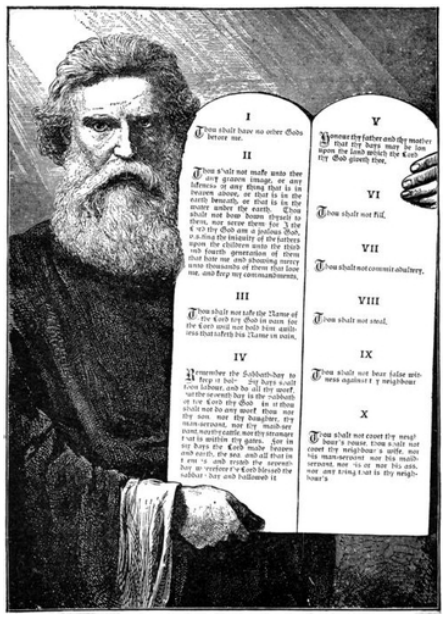
After the Israelites left Egypt they crossed the Red Sea, whose waters divided so that they passed through on dry land. Then they travelled through the wilderness toward Mount Sinai. Passing onward, they wanted water and food; and forgetting the great things God had already done for them, they began to murmur. At a place called Marah they found the water too bitter to drink; so they grumbled, saying to Moses, "What shall we drink?" He asked God; who showed him a tree, which, when cast into the water, made it sweet.

Next the people murmured for food, and God sent them manna, which they gathered every day except the Sabbath; but with all God's care and kindness the Israelites continued to grumble whenever any difficulty arose. Journeying forward, they entered another wilderness, called the Desert of Sin, and came to a place named Rephidim, where they found no water. They were very thirsty, and came to Moses murmuring and saying, "Give us water that we may drink." How could Moses do that? He was grieved with them, and said, "Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord?" But the people grew so angry that they were ready to stone him. Then Moses told God all the trouble, and God showed him what to do. He was to go before the people, taking the elders of Israel with him, and his rod, and God would stand before him on a rock among the mountains of

Horeb. This rock he was to strike, when water would gush forth.

Moses did as God commanded. He went forward with the elders, struck the rock with his rod; and the pure, clear water gushed out, so that all the people were able to drink.

The Ten Commandments



The Israelites journeyed onward and encamped before Mount Sinai. There God talked with Moses, and instructed him to remind the people of the great things He had done for them; and to say that if they obeyed Him, and kept His covenant, they should be a peculiar treasure to Him above all people, and a holy nation.

When the people heard God's message, they answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do." How happy would they have been if they had always kept this promise! But, alas! they did not do so; and great punishments came upon them in consequence.

God also said that on the third day He would descend upon Mount Sinai; and commanded the people to prepare themselves for that great and solemn event. None were to approach the mount, for if they did so they would die. On the third day, according to the command, the people gathered before Mount Sinai. A thick cloud covered the mountain, which smoked and quaked, and there were thunders and lightnings; a trumpet also sounded exceeding loud, so that all the people trembled. Then God spake from the midst of the fire, and gave the people the Ten Commandments. These you will find in the twentieth chapter of Exodus; and little folks with sharp eyes can read them in our picture.

We are told that "all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the

mountain smoking;" and when they saw it they were so much afraid that they stood afar off. How holy is God's law, and how careful should we be to obey it!

Bezaleel and Aholiab

After God had given the Ten Commandments, He called Moses up into the mountain; where he remained forty days and forty nights. During that time, God told him to speak to the Israelites, asking them to give gold, silver, brass, blue, purple, fine linen, oil, precious stones, and other things, to make a tabernacle or sanctuary, where God would dwell among them. God showed Moses the pattern of this tabernacle, with its coverings, its holy place and most holy place, its ark of the covenant with the cherubims and mercy-seat, its table for the shewbread, golden candlestick, and altar of incense, and the garments for Aaron and his sons, etc.; everything was accurately described by God. Then God instructed Moses as to who could do the work He had commanded to be done, and named two to whom He had given special wisdom and skill: these two were Bezaleel and Aholiab.

When Moses came down from the mountain he called Aaron and all the people of Israel, and told them what God had commanded. The people willingly brought gifts, till more than enough was provided. Then Bezaleel and Aholiab, and other wise-hearted men, worked diligently until the tabernacle and all things belonging to it were made exactly as God had instructed. Some worked in gold and silver, others in brass and wood; wise women spun cloth of blue, purple and scarlet, and fine linen; precious stones were set for the high priest's ephod and breastplate; and, at last, all

was finished. Then we are told "Moses did look upon all the work, and, behold, they had done it as the Lord had commanded." Then Moses blessed them.

The Brazen Serpent

Jesus Christ says that "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up." What did Jesus mean?

Nearly forty years had passed since God gave His law from Mount Sinai; and frequently the people had sinned during that time. Through their disobedience they were compelled to wander in the wilderness for many long years, instead of going straight to Canaan. While thus wandering they passed round the land of Edom, and became grieved and impatient because of the dreariness and difficulty of the way. They murmured against God and against Moses, and said, "Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread." They meant the manna which God gave them daily.

God allowed fiery serpents to come among the people because of their sin, which bit them, and many died. Then they came to Moses, saying, "We have sinned ... pray unto the Lord that He take away the serpents from us." Moses did so; and God told him to make a serpent of brass and to put it on a pole; and said that all who looked to the serpent should live. The serpent of brass could not heal them, but God healed them as they obeyed his command to look to the serpent. It was look and live.

Now I think we see what Jesus means. God has said that all must die because of sin; but those who look to Jesus and

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The Captain of the Lord's Host

News of the miraculous way in which the Israelites had been brought across the Jordan spread rapidly among the Canaanites, and when they heard what God had done, they were very much afraid. We are told that "their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel."

God had said to Joshua that the land of Canaan was to be taken possession of by the Israelites; and had commanded him to "Be strong and of a good courage," and had strengthened him by saying, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." Joshua and the people were now in Canaan, and before them lay a stronghold of the Canaanites, named Jericho, having high walls and strong gates. This city the Israelites had to capture; but the inhabitants closed the gates, and prepared to fight fiercely to prevent Joshua and his warriors from getting in.

As Joshua was alone at this time, near Jericho, he looked up, and saw a man standing with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went to him and asked, "Art thou for us or for our adversaries?" The man answered, "Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I come." Do you know who it was? Was it an angel? I think it was more than an angel. It was the Lord! Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshipped, saying, "What saith my Lord unto His servant?" Then the Lord told Joshua, as before he had told Moses, to take his shoes from

his feet, for the place on which he stood was holy; and instructed him how Jericho was to be captured.

How Jericho was Captured

When men in olden times attacked a city, they tried to batter down the walls with heavy beams of wood, having heads of iron, called battering rams; but God did not instruct the Israelites thus to capture Jericho. They were to remember that it was not by their own power they could conquer the Canaanites, but only as God gave them the victory over their enemies. So God commanded Joshua to lay siege to Jericho in a very strange way. He said that seven priests, each having a trumpet, were to go before the ark. In front of them the armed men of Israel were to march; and behind the ark the people were to follow. In this way they were to go round the city once each day for six days, the priests blowing their trumpets each time. The seventh day they were to go in the same manner round the city seven times; and God said that when the priests blew their trumpets the seventh time, the people were to give a great shout, and the walls of the city would fall down.

Joshua and the people did as God commanded. They marched round the city carrying the ark, the priests blowing their trumpets; and on the seventh day they marched round seven times. The last time, when the priests blew their trumpets, the people shouted with a great shout, and the walls of the city fell down flat. Then the Israelites went up and took possession of it.

Thus God delivered Jericho into the hands of His people. All the inhabitants were killed except Rahab and her relatives. These were spared because Rahab had been kind to the spies whom Joshua had sent.

Achan's Sin

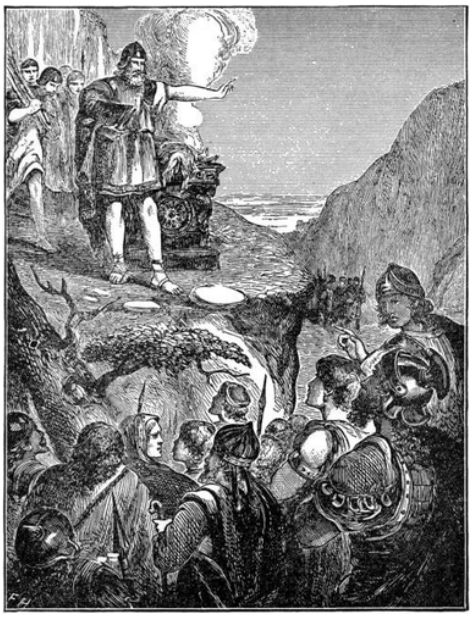
God commanded the Israelites to destroy Jericho; and all the gold, silver, and other riches found there were to be devoted to the Lord. If any disobeyed this command then a curse was to rest upon all, and they were not to prosper.

The Israelites were to conquer the Canaanites, and drive them out of the land. So Joshua prepared to attack a city named Ai. Three thousand of his men went to capture it, but the inhabitants came out and drove them back, killing some of them. Joshua was greatly grieved. He knew that unless God made the Israelites victorious, the Canaanites would be able to overcome them, and God had appeared to fail them this time. Oh! he was sorry. But he told God the trouble, and God showed him the cause of it.

One of the Israelites, named Achan, saw among the spoil of Jericho, a handsome garment, some silver, and a bar of gold, and coveted them. He stole these things and hid them away in his tent, thinking that no one saw him; but God knew it all. Achan's sin was the cause of Israel's defeat! God showed Joshua how the man who had done the wickedness was to be discovered. Each tribe was to be brought before God, then each family of the tribe He chose, then each household of the family taken, and lastly each man of the family chosen. Finally, Achan was pointed out by God. Joshua bade him confess what he had done, and he said that he had taken the Babylonish garment and the gold and silver.

Messengers were sent to his tent, who brought what Achan had hidden; and he, with his sons and daughters, his cattle, and all that he had, and the garment, silver, and gold, were taken to a valley near by, where the people stoned them, and burned them with fire; and then raised over all a great heap of stones, which remained as a memorial to warn others against sinning as Achan had done.

The Altar on Mount Ebal



Before Moses died he called the Israelites together, and urged them to faithfully serve God; also directing that when they entered Canaan, they were to build an altar of rough stones, covered with plaster, on Mount Ebal, and to write the words of God's law upon this altar. Then six of the tribes were to stand on Mount Gerizim, and six on Mount Ebal, and, in the hearing of all the people, the blessings for obedience and the cursings for disobedience were to be proclaimed.

Mounts Ebal and Gerizim are two rugged mountains that face each other in Samaria. When the Israelites advanced thus far, they remembered the words of Moses. Joshua built the altar as directed, on which he offered sacrifices to God, and wrote a copy of the law upon it. All Israel stood, "half of them over against Mount Gerizim, and half of them over against Mount Ebal," and Joshua read all the words of the law, "the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law." Then the loud voices of the Levites were heard from the mountain sides, declaring, in the hearing of all the people, the blessings for obedience and the curses for disobedience, as God had commanded.

The Cities of Refuge

Revenge is contrary to the teaching of Jesus Christ, "If thine enemy hunger, feed him," says the Saviour; but among the Israelites and other eastern nations a different practice prevailed. If one slew another, the kinsman of him that was slain felt bound to avenge his relative, and to slay him that had done the deed. Sometimes people were killed by accident, when it was clearly unjust that he who had unwittingly killed another should be slain. To guard against the innocent thus suffering, God commanded that "cities of refuge" should be appointed, to which the slayer might flee, "which killeth any person at unawares."

These cities were six in number: Kedesh, Shechem, and Kirjath-arba, on the west of Jordan; and Bezer, Ramoth, and Golan, on the east of that river. They were so arranged that a few hours' rapid flight would bring the slayer from any part of the land to one of the cities of refuge. Jewish writers say that the roads leading to these cities were always kept in good repair, and that guide-posts were placed at every cross road with "Refuge! Refuge!" written upon them. But the man that willfully killed another was not sheltered. He was given up to the avenger to be slain.

In our picture we see the slayer running to the city gate; the avenger close behind, shooting arrows at him. He has thus far escaped, and two or three more steps will place him in safety. But, once within the city, he must not quit its refuge

until the death of the high priest. If he do so and the avenger find him he may be slain. But upon the death of the high priest he will be allowed to return home, to dwell in peace again.

Joshua's Exhortation

Exhortation seems a hard word, but it simply means to strongly urge to good deeds, and this is what our artist shows Joshua to be doing.

Joshua is now an old man, and the Israelites are settled peaceably in Canaan. He has called them before him, with their elders, and heads, and judges, and officers. He tells them that he is old and about to die, and reminds them of the land that has already been conquered and divided among them, and of that which still remains to be conquered; urging them to be "very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that they turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left." He bids them take good heed therefore unto themselves, that they love the Lord their God; and warns them that if they go back and do wickedly, the anger of the Lord will be kindled against them, and they will perish quickly from off the good land which God has given them.

In his address, Joshua said, "Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls, that not one good thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof." How faithful is God! He never fails in His promises: and we are told He is unchangeable, so that whatever He promises now He will fulfill, and whatever warnings He gives will surely come to pass. How good is it to have this holy and wise God for our Father, and to know that He promises

abundantly to bless all those that trust in the Saviour, Jesus Christ. But let us take heed of the warnings against sin given in God's Holy Word.

Gideon and the Fleece

After the death of Joshua, the Israelites turned away from God, and served idols. Therefore the evils came upon them of which they had been warned by Moses and Joshua. But at different times God, seeing their distress, raised up "judges" to deliver them from their enemies, and to judge over them. The first of these judges was named Othniel. He was Caleb's nephew. The last was Samuel. One that lived about one hundred years before Samuel was named Gideon.

The Israelites were at this time in great trouble. They were hiding in dens and caves because of the Midianites, who had conquered them and overrun their country. When their corn was ripe these enemies came and destroyed it, so altogether they were in sad plight. One day Gideon was threshing wheat in a secluded place, so as to escape the notice of the Midianites, when an angel from God appeared to him, bidding him to go and save the Israelites from their foes. Gideon obeyed the command: but before commencing the battle he much desired a sign from God showing that He would give the Israelites the victory. The sign Gideon asked for was, that when he laid a fleece of wool on the ground, if the victory were to be his, then the fleece should be wet and the ground dry. He placed the wool on the ground, and taking it up the next morning found it wet, although the ground was dry. So he knew God had answered him as he desired. But he was not quite satisfied. He begged God for a

second sign. This time the ground was to be wet and the fleece of wool dry. God gave him this sign also: and then Gideon felt sure that the Israelites would be victorious over the Midianites.

The Defeat of the Midianites

Large numbers of the Israelites gathered around Gideon, prepared to fight against the Midianites, who were encamped in a valley, "like grasshoppers for multitude." How Gideon's host was reduced till only three hundred men remained, and the wonderful dream he heard related, when he and his servant went down as spies into the enemy's camp, are recorded in the seventh chapter of Judges. It was not by their own bravery or power that the Israelites were to overcome their enemies. God was to give them the victory: and He chose Gideon and three hundred men to overcome the great and mighty host of the Midianites.

Gideon divided his three hundred men into three companies, and put a trumpet in every man's hand, and gave to each a pitcher with a lamp inside. Then he said, "Look on me, and do likewise: when I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of the camp, and say, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon.'" Gideon and the hundred men of his company approached the enemy's camp by night, and the other two companies drew nigh also, so that the Midianites where surrounded. Then all blew their trumpets, broke their pitchers, held up their lamps (torches), and cried out as they had been commanded.

The Midianites heard the trumpets' blast and the cry, and saw the lights. They were thrown into confusion, and one fought against another; then they fled, and were pursued by the Israelites, great numbers of whom gathered together and followed after their flying enemies. Thus the Midianites were overcome, and Israel had peace during the lifetime of Gideon.

The Death of Samson

Samson's birth was foretold by an angel. He was to grow up a Nazarite, forbidden to drink strong drink, neither was his head to be shaved. His strength was very great; but his marriage was sinful, and his doings with the idolatrous Philistines terrible. Though an Israelite and a judge, I fear much he sinned greatly against God. On one occasion he went to Gaza, a city of the Philistines. The inhabitants tried to take him, but he arose at midnight and carried away the gates of their city. In our picture though he looks so strong, yet we see chains on his legs, and he is blind! How came he to lose his sight and be made a prisoner? I think it was owing to his sin and folly.

He became acquainted with a wicked woman, who enticed him to tell her in what his great strength lay. Three times he told her falsely, but at last he said that if the flowing locks of his hair were removed his strength would depart. While he slept these locks were cut off, then the Philistines burst in upon him, and when he arose to resist them, he found that his strength was gone. Then his eyes were cruelly put out, and he was bound with fetters of brass.

Our artist shows him blind, brought out to make sport at the Philistines' feast. He is very sorrowful, and, I think, angry. He asks the lad beside him to place his hands upon the pillars supporting the house; then, his great strength returning, he bows himself with all his might; the pillars break, the house

falls, and Samson, with very many of the Philistines, is crushed amid the ruins. Was not this a terrible end to what might have been a noble life?

Ruth and Naomi

Naomi was the wife of a Jewish man named Elimelech, who left his own city of Bethlehem to go into the land of Moab, because there was a famine in Canaan. Some time afterwards he died, leaving Naomi a widow with two sons, all dwellers in a strange land. Her sons married two young women belonging to Moab, whose names were Orpah and Ruth. After living there about ten years Naomi's sons died also, leaving Orpah and Ruth widows, along with their widowed mother-in-law. Then Naomi determined to return to her own land. Orpah and Ruth accompanied Naomi some distance on her journey; then she bade them to leave her, telling each to go back to her mother's house in Moab, while she would pursue her way alone to the land of Judah. They were unwilling to do so, saying they would go with her to her land and people; but she urged them to depart, assuring them that they would gain nothing by leaving their own country to accompany her, and that they had better return to their own homes. Then the story informs us - you will find it in the Bible, in the Book of Ruth - that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law and departed; but Ruth clave unto her, saying, "Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me."

So Ruth refused to leave her mother-in-law, and journeyed with her until they reached Canaan. Then they both dwelt in the city of Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, where we shall meet with them again.

Boaz and Ruth

When Naomi returned to Bethlehem she was poor. The poor were allowed at harvest time to follow the reapers; gleaning or gathering up the stray ears of corn. One day, Ruth obtained permission from her mother-in-law to go gleaning, and went to glean in the field of a rich man named Boaz, who happened to be a kinsman, or relative of Elimelech. But Ruth did not know of this relationship.

Boaz saw Ruth gleaning, and asked one of his servants who she was. The servant replied, "It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab." Then Boaz spoke kindly to Ruth, telling her not to go to any other field to glean, but to stay with his maidens and glean in his field. She fell on her face before him and bowed herself to the ground, and asked, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?" Boaz was pleased with her because of her kindness to Naomi, so he replied, "It hath fully been showed me all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband." He also bade her to eat and drink with his servants, and told his reapers to let some handfuls of grain fall on purpose for her. So Ruth gleaned that day quite a large quantity of barley, which she took home to Naomi. Then she learned that Boaz was her kinsman.

She continued gleaning until the end of harvest; and afterwards became the wife of Boaz and grandmother of

Jesse, the father of David. Jesus Christ descended from David; so we see what high honour was bestowed upon Ruth for her kindness to her mother-in-law.

Hannah Praying Before the Lord

The Tabernacle, which had been set up by the Israelites in the wilderness, was after the conquest of Canaan erected at Shiloh, a city about ten miles south of Shechem. There it remained for more than three hundred years. No Temple was at Jerusalem in those days, so the Jewish priests offered sacrifices to God in the Tabernacle at Shiloh.

One day, Hannah, the wife of a priest named Elkanah, came to the Tabernacle to worship. She was grieved because she had no children; and especially sad because she had no son. So she knelt down and prayed to God, and asked God to remember her sorrow and to give her a son; promising that if God granted her request, she would give that son to Him all the days of his life.

As Hannah prayed, Eli, the high priest, saw her. She did not speak aloud, but prayed in her heart; her lips moved, but no voice was heard; so Eli thought that a drunken woman had come before the Lord. He reproved her saying, "How long wilt thou be drunken? Put away thy wine from thee." But Hannah had not drunk wine. She answered Eli, "No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." Then Eli bade her "Go in peace, and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him."

Hannah left the Tabernacle. Her face was no longer sad. She believed God had heard her prayer; and He had done so. In

due time a son was given her, whom she named Samuel. Samuel means Heard of God, which name Hannah gave him in remembrance of God's goodness in hearing her prayer.

Eli and Samuel

Elkanah went up to Shiloh yearly to offer sacrifice: and when Samuel was old enough, Hannah went with her husband and took her little boy with her. They came to Eli the high priest, and Hannah said: "Oh, my Lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here praying. For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition. Therefore also have I given him to the Lord." Then she left Samuel with Eli.

Samuel assisted Eli in the Tabernacle service, and wore a linen ephod like a priest. His mother came yearly to see him, when she accompanied Elkanah to the sacrifice at Shiloh, and each time brought with her a little coat, which she had made for her son. Eli was an old man, who had two wicked sons. These he had not restrained as he should have done. So God was displeased with him and them on account of their sins.

One night, while the lamp in the Tabernacle was burning, and Eli was resting, Samuel was sleeping. A voice came to him calling, "Samuel! " He rose, and ran to Eli saying, "Here am I." But Eli had not called, so Samuel lay down again. A second time the same voice called, "Samuel! " He went to Eli and said, "Here am I; for thou didst call me." But Eli replied, "I called not, my son; lie down again." The call was repeated a third time; then Eli told Samuel it was the Lord who called him; and bade him answer if the voice came again, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Again God called, and Samuel answered as Eli had commanded him. Then God told Samuel

what terrible things should befall Eli and his sons through their wickedness.

Death of Eli and His Sons

In the morning Samuel feared to tell Eli what the Lord had shown him; but Eli bade him do so, saying to Samuel, "God do so to thee, and more also, if thou hide any thing from me of all that He said unto thee." So Samuel told Eli all God had said, keeping nothing back, and Eli answered, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Afterwards there was war between the Israelites and the Philistines, and both sides prepared for battle. They fought; the Israelites were defeated, and many of them slain. Then they sent to Shiloh and fetched the ark of the covenant out of the Tabernacle, carrying it to the camp, and thinking that if the ark were with them they would overcome their enemies. But the ark only signified God's presence in their midst; it was not God Himself, to give them victory. It was very sinful of them thus to use what God had made so holy; and God suffered them again to be defeated. The ark was taken by the Philistines, and many of the Israelites were slain.

Eli, who was then ninety-eight years old, and nearly blind, sat by the wayside, trembling for the safety of the ark, and waiting for messengers to bring news of the battle. Presently a messenger came who told him the Israelites had fled before the Philistines, that his two sons Hophni and Phinehas were slain, and that the ark of God had been taken. When he heard that the ark had been taken, he fell backward from off his seat and died. Thus God's judgment upon Eli and his

sons came to pass. In our picture we see the messenger, who has just come from the field of battle, telling Eli the sad tidings that caused his death.

Playing on the Harp Before Saul

We are not told much in the Bible concerning the early life of David. He was born in Bethlehem. We have seen who his father was, but I do not find that his mother's name is given. His own name means "beloved." What a happy name! He must have been much loved by his parents, and we know he was loved by God.

Like many other youths in Canaan, he acted as a shepherd to his father's flocks. He was a fair, open-faced boy; "ruddy, and of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look at," so the Scriptures say. He was a good musician, knew how to sling stones at a mark, and was so brave that when a lion and a bear came to attack the lambs of his flock he went after them and killed them both. One day a strange and most important event happened. Samuel, the prophet, came from Ramah, and pouring some very precious oil upon the head of David, anointed him to be the future King of Israel. Saul was then King, but on account of his wickedness God had rejected him, saying that another should reign in his stead.

Soon after this event Saul became very wretched. An evil spirit troubled him, we are told. His servants advised him to get a man that could play skilfully upon the harp, so that music might drive away his misery. Some one suggested David; and David was sent for. He brought sweet strains from his harp, and Saul was soothed. Saul was pleased with David. We are told that "he loved him greatly," and that

David became his armour-bearer. But he soon grew jealous, and twice threw a javelin at David, seeking to smite him to the wall and kill him. This, however, he was not able to do.

David and Goliath

How attentively David looks at the stones in his hand. His sling is on his arm, and his bag by his side. What is he about to do with those stones? And who is that tall man in armour, strutting about with such a long spear in his hand?

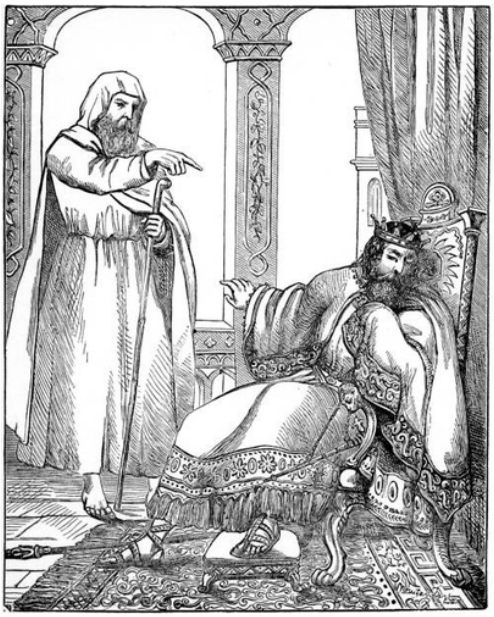
Two armies were drawn up in battle array. They were the armies of the Israelites and Philistines. The camp of the Israelites was on one hill, and that of the Philistines was upon another; a valley lying between. For forty days these armies had been facing each other, but yet the battle had been delayed. The Philistines had on their side a giant of great height and strength, encased in armour, who daily came out, challenging the Israelites to send a man from their camp to fight with him. But no man among them dared to go against Goliath, the Philistines' champion.

Meanwhile Jesse had sent David to the Israelites' camp to see after his brethren. He heard what the giant said, and offered to go out against him. Saul was informed of David's offer, and sent for him. Saul told David he was not able to fight the giant, but he boldly replied, "The Lord which delivered me out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear, He will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine." David trusted not in his own power, but in God! Then Saul said, "Go, and the Lord be with thee."

He went, slung one of the smooth stones he had chosen out of the brook, smote the Philistine in the forehead so that he

fell to the earth, and then ran and cut off his head. Thus God enabled this ruddy youth to overcome the giant Philistine, and to slay him with a sling and a stone.

Nathan Reproving the King



David was now King. He had great riches and honour, and a palace had been built for him. He had brought the ark from Kirjath-jearim, and placed it in the tabernacle prepared for it at Jerusalem, and he now reigned over all the people of Israel and Judah. But David did a very wicked thing. He took the wife of Uriah the Hittite for his wife, and caused Uriah to be slain. God was displeased at what he had done, and sent Nathan the prophet to reprove him.

Nathan's reproof was given by a parable. It was a story of a poor man who had one dear little lamb. It grew up in his house, played with his children, and was very precious to him. But one day a traveller came to a rich neighbour, who possessed great flocks and herds, and this neighbour, instead of killing one of his own lambs and setting it before his guest, sent and took the poor man's lamb and killed it.

David heard the story, and was very angry. He said the rich man should die, and the lamb taken away should be restored fourfold. Then Nathan, looking at the King, said: "Thou art the man! " He showed David how greatly he had sinned, and told him that trouble and sorrow would come upon him for what he had done. God had given him riches and honour, and all that he could wish for; yet he had taken the one precious thing of Uriah's, even his wife, and had caused him to be slain. David was sorely grieved when he

saw how wickedly he had acted. He confessed his sin to God, and God forgave it; but great trouble came upon the King afterwards through this crime.

David and Araunah

After David had reigned may years, he numbered the people of Israel. This was wrong; and God sent a pestilence which destroyed seventy thousand men. David was grieved, and prayed that God would punish him and spare the people. God stayed the hand of the destroying angel; who stood by the threshing-floor of Araunah, whither David was told to go and offer sacrifice. David went. He purchased the threshing-floor of Araunah, also oxen and wood and offered a burnt sacrifice to God. The following verses describe the scene:

Beside Araunah's threshing-place
  The awful angel took his stand,
When from high heaven came words of grace -
  "It is enough; stay now thine hand."

For David's penitential prayer
  Had enter'd God's compassionate ear;
And where the angel stood, even there
  God bade the King and altar rear.

Araunah offered ground, and wood,
  And oxen for the sacrifice:
David stood noble wish withstood,
  And bought them all at full price.

His answer has a royal ring;
  Its lesson high shall not be lost:

"Burnt offerings I will never bring
  Unto Jehovah without cost."

The altar rose, the victims died,
  The plague was stayed, and lo, there fell -
Token that Heaven was satisfied -
  A fire from God, and all was well.

'Twas like a finger from the skies -
  That falling fire - to show God's will,
That here the Temple should arise
  And crown Moriah's sacred hill.

And still God marks the faithful prayer,
  The careful work, the costly pains;
The Spirit's fire descendeth there,
  And there, as in a shrine, remains.

- Richard Wilton, M.A.

Elijah Fed by Ravens

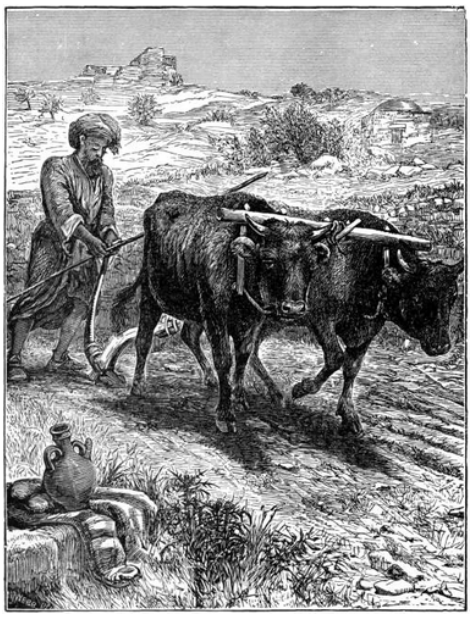
God was displeased with King Ahab, and sent His prophet, Elijah the Tishbite, to say unto him, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth there shall not be dew nor rain for years in all Israel." God knew that these words would make Ahab angry with Elijah, so He commanded Elijah to get out of Ahab's way. "Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there."

Elijah went, and the ravens brought him bread and meat, morning and evening, and he drank of the brook. But after many days the brook dried up, and God told him to go to Zarephath, where a widow would sustain him. So he arose and went to Zarephath. When he came to the gate of the city he saw the widow gathering sticks; and called to her, saying, "Bring me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink, and a morsel of bread in thy hand, that I may eat."

The widow turned and said, "As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but only a handful of meal, and a little oil in a cruse; and, behold, I am gathering a few sticks, that I may go in and bake it for me and my son, that we may eat it before we starve to death." Elijah told her not to fear, but to make a cake for him, and, afterwards, one for her son and herself, for God had said that neither her handful of meal

nor her cruse of oil should fail until He again sent rain upon the earth. So she did as Elijah told her, and there was always enough oil and meal for their daily food, according to the word of the Lord which He spake by Elijah.

Ploughing in Canaan



In Scripture frequent mention is made of the husbandman and his work. Ploughing the land, sowing the seed, reaping the harvest, and winnowing the grain are often referred to. Our picture shows an Eastern husbandman ploughing. How different it is to ploughing in our own land! There is no coulter; and instead of the broad steel plough-share we see a pointed piece of wood. And the long handles with which our labourers guide their ploughs - where are they? The strong horses, too, harnessed one behind the other, are missing. Yes! none of these were used in Canaan. Small oxen drew the plough; and the husbandman guided it by means of a single handle, as we see him doing in the picture. Thus their method of ploughing was a slow one, and unless the land had been very good their harvests would have been poor.

Often these husbandmen had to wait until the rain made the ground soft enough for their ploughs to enter it, consequently many had to toil in cold, stormy, winter weather. To this the proverb alludes which says: "The sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." (Proverbs 20:4)

Perhaps it was just such a plough, drawn by just such oxen as we see in our picture, that Elisha was using when Elijah passed by and cast his mantle upon him; thereby calling Elisha to be his servant and successor. We are told that

Elisha "took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."

The Shunammite's Son

Many interesting stories are told in the Bible, few of which are more touching than that of Elisha the prophet, and the Shunammite woman. This story we find in the fourth chapter of the Second Book of Kings.

We read of the prophet journeying to and fro, and resting in the little chamber that the kind Shunammite had built for him on the wall of her house. We see its bed, table, stool, and candlestick; and the joy beaming upon the good woman's face when a tiny infant son was given her. How she loved him! And as he grew up how carefully she watched over him. But a sad time was coming.

The golden corn was in the field ready for reaping, for the harvest time had come. The hot sun shone overhead, and the little lad was out with his father in the field, probably running about among the corn. Suddenly he felt a violent pain, and cried out, "My head, my head!" Then joy was changed to sorrow. The father saw his son was ill, and bade a lad carry the little boy to his mother, on whose knees he sat till noon, and then he died.

Next we see the mother leaving her dead son, and journeying to find the prophet. Elisha sees her coming, and sends Gehazi to inquire if all is well. Then she falls down before the prophet and tells him her trouble; and he sends his servant with his staff to lay it upon the dead child. The story closes by stating how Elisha follows Gehazi, goes to the chamber where the dead boy lay, prays to God that the

life may be restored, and finally has the joy of giving the lad, alive and well again, into the arms of his mother.

The Little Captive Maid

Naaman was a great general in the army of the King of Syria, who esteemed him highly, because it was Naaman that led the Syrians when God gave them victory over the Israelites. But in spite of his bravery and his high position, he was miserable, because he suffered from a terrible disease called leprosy. Now, among the captives whom the Syrians had brought back from war was a little Israelitish maiden, who was appointed to wait upon Naaman's wife. She had heard of the wonderful things which Elisha did in the name of God; and she told her mistress that if Naaman could only see this prophet, who was in Samaria, he could be cured. And the King was told what the maid had said, and he sent a letter to the King of Israel commanding him to cure Naaman of his leprosy. But the King of Israel was afraid, and thought the King of Syria sought this way to quarrel with him. When Elisha heard of the King's fear, he sent and desired that Naaman should be brought to him. So Naaman came in his chariot, and stood at Elisha's door. But the prophet instead of coming to him, sent a message directing Naaman to wash in Jordan seven times, when his leprous flesh would be restored to health. Naaman had thought that Elisha would have received him with much ceremony and touched him, bidding the leprosy to depart; so he was angry and said, "Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean?" Therefore he went away in a rage. But his servants persuaded him to carry out the prophet's

injunction, and he went and dipped seven times in Jordan, and was made whole.

Jonah at Nineveh

Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh, and cry out that the city should be destroyed on account of the wickedness of its inhabitants. But instead of obeying God's command he fled in a ship that was bound for Tarshish. Then a great storm arose, and the shipmen cast Jonah into the sea, believing that the storm had been sent through his disobedience. God saved Jonah by means of a large fish, and brought him safely to land again.

A second time God said to Jonah, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." So Jonah arose and went as God had directed him. Now Nineveh was a very large city, about sixty miles in circumference, and Jonah went some distance inside and then cried out, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" It was a strange and terrible cry which sounded throughout the city, and as the Ninevites heard it they feared God, proclaimed a fast, covered themselves with sackcloth, and every man was commanded to forsake evil. So they hoped God would forgive them and spare their city.

God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, therefore He spared their city. When Jonah saw that Nineveh was spared he was very angry, and prayed God to take away his life. He made a booth and sat under it to see what would become of the city. Then God sheltered him from the sun by a gourd, and afterwards taught him by it how

wrong he was in being displeased because Nineveh had been spared. Nineveh was afterwards overthrown, and has remained since then but a heap of ruins.

Hezekiah and Sennacherib

Sennacherib, the King of Assyria, invaded the land of Judah, and threatened to lay siege to Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah took counsel with his princes and mighty men, and repaired the broken walls, and made them higher. He made many other preparations for the defence of the city, and went among his people, exhorting them to trust in God, and be of good courage. But Sennacherib sent messengers to induce those that guarded the walls of the city to revolt against Hezekiah, saying, "Do not believe this Hezekiah when he tells you that your God will deliver you; hath any of the nations against which I have made war been delivered by their gods?"

When Hezekiah heard these words he went into the house of the Lord, and sent messengers to Isaiah, asking for his prayers. Isaiah said to them, "Thus saith the Lord, 'Be not afraid of the words with which the King of Assyria hath blasphemed Me. I will send a blast upon him, and he shall return and shall fall by the sword in his own land.'" Afterwards the King of Assyria sent a letter to Hezekiah, in which he repeated his sneers at the power of God. When Hezekiah read it, he went into the house of the Lord, and spreading the letter before the Lord, prayed for His help. God answered, by the mouth of Isaiah, that the King of Assyria should not enter Jerusalem, nor shoot over it, but be turned back the way he came. And the same night the angel of the Lord went into the camp of the Assyrians, and smote

one hundred and eighty-five thousand. Then Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, and as he was worshipping in the house of his god, there came to him two of his sons, who killed him.

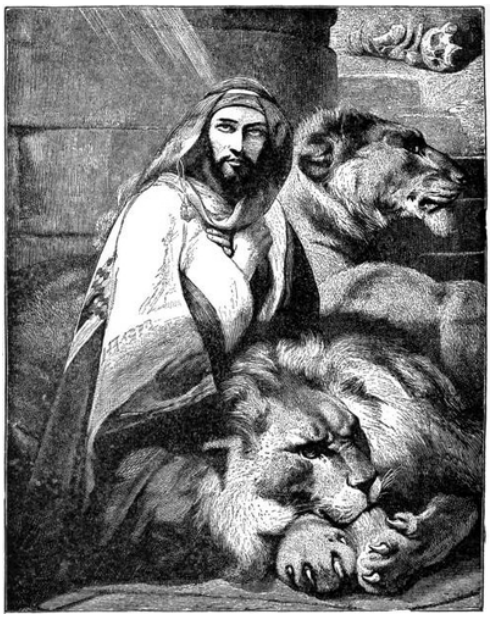
The Brave Hebrew Boys

Brave boys and girls! We all wish to be brave, do we not? Then we must learn to say "No," when tempted to do wrong.

These Hebrew boys were young nobles who had been carried captive from Jerusalem to Babylon; but though in a strange land, subject to the mighty king Nebuchadnezzar, they feared not to refuse his food and wine when they knew that the taking of it would cause them to sin against God. They were well educated Hebrew youths, and the Babylonish king had commanded that they should be taught the learning of the Chaldeans; also, to keep them in health and with beautiful countenances, he had ordered that the meat and wine from his table should be given them. Their names were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. Daniel seems to have been their leader. We find "he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." So he begged the king's servant the feed him and his three companions on plain food and pure water; but the servant feared to do so, lest the king should find them worse looking than those who ate his meat and drank his wine, and the servant should lose his head in consequence. A trial was made, however, for ten days, at the end of which time they were found to be better looking than the boys fed on rich food and wine. Therefore, the servant let them live plainly according to their request; and at the end of three years, when they stood before the king, we are

told that for wisdom and understanding none were found like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

Daniel and the Lions



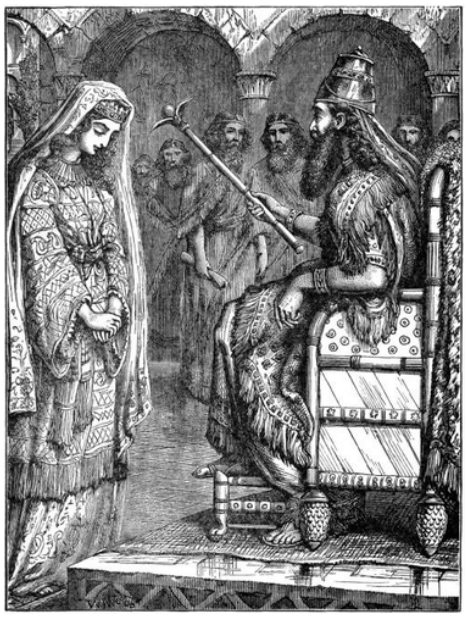
When Darius came to the throne, upon the death of Belshazzar, he set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes. Over these he appointed three presidents, of whom Daniel was first. Now the princes and other presidents were jealous of Daniel, and sought to find some fault against him; but could not, as he was a faithful servant of the King. Then they tried to injure him because of his praying to God. So they came to the King, and said, "King Darius live for ever: all the great officers of thy kingdom have consulted together to establish a royal law, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O King, he shall be cast into a den of lions." The King signed the writing and established the law. But Daniel still knelt and prayed three times a day as before.

His enemies saw him praying, and told the King, urging him to carry out the law. But the King was angry with himself that he had agreed to such a law, and tried to think of some way to save Daniel. Then these men urged that the law could not be altered. So Daniel was cast into the den of lions, and a stone was put over the mouth of the den, which was sealed by the King and the lords. But the King had said to Daniel, "Thy God whom thou servest will deliver thee."

The King passed the night fasting, and could not sleep. In the morning, very early, he arose and went to the den of

lions, and cried with a lamentable voice, "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God able to deliver thee from the lions?" Then Daniel said, "O King, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths."

Esther Before the King



Ahasuerus reigned over the vast empire of Persia, and Esther, the adopted daughter of a Jew named Mordecai, was Queen. None in the palace knew she was Jewish, for Mordecai had charged her not to make it known. He abode in the king's palace, and was one of the king's servants.

Ahasuerus promoted Haman, one of his courtiers, a cruel and wicked man, to be over all his princes and officers; and all bowed down to Haman and did him reverence except Mordecai, the Jew. Then was Haman filled with wrath against Mordecai and his people, and obtained from the king a decree ordering that all the Jews throughout his dominions should be slain. Mordecai informed Queen Esther of this decree, and bade her go to the king and plead for her people. Now it was one of the laws of the palace that no one should approach the king in the inner court unless he had been previously called; the penalty for not obeying this law being death, unless the king should hold out the golden sceptre to the offender so that he might live. Esther knew the danger of approaching the king uncalled for, but she bade Mordecai to gather the Jews so that they might spend three days in fasting and prayer, while she and her maidens did the same, and, said she, "So will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law, and if I perish, I perish."

Esther went in. The king graciously held out the golden sceptre to her, accepted her invitation to a banquet, and

finally ordered the wicked Haman to be hanged, and measures to be taken to preserve the lives of the Jews.

David and Jonathan

Jonathan was the son of Saul, the king. He loved David greatly, and regretted that his father, through jealousy, sought David's life. David, after the last attempt of Saul to smite him to the wall by a javelin, fled away, and meeting with Jonathan said: "What have I done? What is mine iniquity, and what is my sin before thy father that he seeketh my life?"

Jonathan sympathised deeply with his friend, and tried to save him. He promised to ascertain whether Saul fully intended to kill David, and, if so, to inform him, that he might escape. Meantime David was to remain in hiding, but on the third day Jonathan was to return with the required information. Before they parted they entered into a solemn covenant, one with the other, to remain firm friends during life; and David promised to show kindness to Jonathan and his children, after God should make him king.

At the time appointed, after ascertaining that Saul still sought David's life, Jonathan went to the field where David lay concealed. Jonathan took with him his bow and arrows and a little lad. Shooting an arrow beyond the lad, he cried, "Make speed, haste, stay not!" These words were intended as a warning to David to flee quickly. When the lad had gone, David arose from his hiding place and came to Jonathan, bowing three times before him. Then they kissed each other, wept, and again pledged themselves to be faithful; after which David fled, and Jonathan returned to the city.

Mother Stories from the New Testament

The Wise Men's Visit

The birth of Jesus Christ was announced by two remarkable events: the coming of wise men from the East, and the appearance of angels to some shepherds at Bethlehem.

The wise men were probably astronomers; and in watching the stars they had seen one that had led them to leave their own country, and take a long journey to Jerusalem. Most likely they rode on camels, and their journey was a tedious one. But at last they reached Jerusalem, where they inquired saying, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the East and are come to worship Him." Tidings of these inquiries were brought to King Herod, and when he heard them he was much troubled. He was a wicked king; and feared that if another king had been born, he would grow up and take the crown away. Herod was also cruel and treacherous, and while pretending to act rightly, often did many evil things. And now he intended to destroy the infant King, who might one day take his sceptre away.

So he first sent for the learned men of the Jews, the chief priests and scribes, and demanded of them where Christ should be born; and when they had replied that it was to be in Bethlehem, he secretly called the wise men before him, and inquired of them what time the star appeared. After getting the information he needed, he dismissed the wise men, bidding them to go to Bethlehem "and search

diligently for the young child; and when ye have found Him," said Herod, "bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also."

So the wise men left King Herod and Jerusalem, and journeyed onward towards Bethlehem; and the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child lay. And when they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy, for they knew they had found Him whom they had come so far to seek.

But the wise men did not bring Herod word where Jesus was; and he was so angry that shortly afterwards he sent his soldiers, and slew all the children under two years of age that were in Bethlehem and its neighbourhood. He thought by so doing to kill Jesus among them, but God prevented him from doing so.

The Angel's Tidings

It was night. In the fields near Bethlehem a company of shepherds kept watch over their flocks. Probably they were holy men, and often thought of God in the stillness of the early morn. And now they may have been thinking of the coming of the promised Messiah.

While watching their flocks, the angel of the Lord came to these shepherds, and a dazzling light shone round about them. They were much afraid; but the angel said, "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." And suddenly there was with the angel a great multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

When the angels had departed, the shepherds returned to Bethlehem; and there, in a stable, they found the infant Jesus, lying in a manger, watched over and cared for by His mother Mary and Joseph. And so great was the surprise and joy of the shepherds that they went out and told all they met of the wondrous things which they had seen.

Shortly after the visit of the shepherds, the wise men from the East reached Bethlehem, and in a house they found Joseph, and Mary, and Jesus. Then they fell down and worshipped Jesus, opening the treasures they had brought, and offering Him precious gifts, gold and frankincense and

myrrh. But God warned them not to go back to Herod, to tell him where the new-born King of the Jews was, and they returned to their own country another way.

Jesus in the Temple

When Jesus was twelve years of age, His parents took Him with them to Jerusalem to the feast of the Passover. Great numbers journeyed from different parts to keep this feast; and travelled in companies or caravans, the women and old men riding on asses or mules, and the rest going on foot. Thus Joseph and Mary, with Jesus, left Nazareth, and with many others journeyed to Jerusalem, where they kept the Passover.

When the feast was ended, as they returned homewards, Joseph and Mary discovered that Jesus was missing; but supposing Him to have been somewhere among the company, they continued their first day's short journey. When, however, evening came, and the caravan halted, and Jesus was nowhere to be found, His parents sorrowfully returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. At last, on the third day, they went to the Temple, and found Jesus sitting in the midst of the aged and learned Jewish doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. "And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

His parents were amazed when they saw Jesus in such company. But Mary, while she rejoiced at finding Him, gently said, "Son, why hast Thou thus dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." Jesus replied, "How is it that ye sought Me? Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

Jesus was the Son of God, and doing God's work was being about His Father's business. Years afterwards He said, "I came not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."

The Wonderful Draught of Fishes

One day, as the crowds pressed round Him to hear the Word of God, Jesus came to the Lake of Gennesaret and saw two boats drawn up on the shore. Now one of these belonged to a man named Simon Peter, who was at the water's edge washing his nets. Jesus entered into this boat and asked Simon to push it off from the land a little. Then He sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when He had done speaking to them He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught of fishes." Simon, answering Him, said, "Master, we have toiled all through the night and have taken nothing, but as you wish it I will let down the net again." And they let down the net into the sea, but it enclosed so great a multitude of fishes that they could not draw them up; and the net brake. Then Simon beckoned to his partners, James and John, who were in the other boat, that they should come and help them. And they came and filled both boats with the fishes, so that they began to sink.

When Simon Peter saw it he fell down before Jesus, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all that were with him were astonished at the marvellous draught of fishes which they had taken. And Jesus said unto Simon, "Fear not, Simon Peter; from henceforth thou shalt be a fisher of men." Meaning that he was to go about winning souls for God, instead of being a fisherman.

And when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all they had and followed Christ.

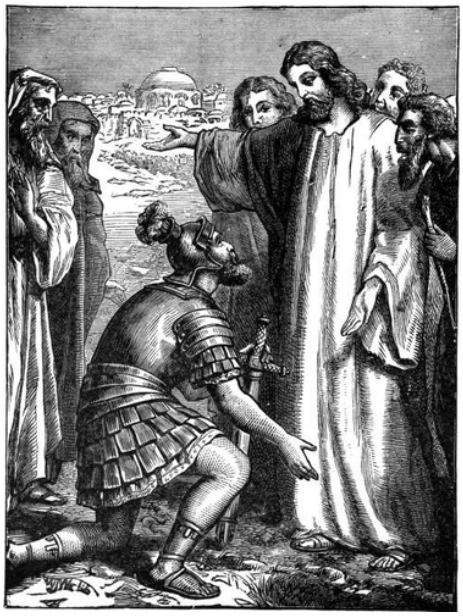
The House Built Upon the Sand

What a foolish man the builder of the house shown in our picture must have been! Of course, when the wind blew and the waves dashed against his house, it would fall. Look how the sea has washed the foundation away, and how the roof is falling in! And the people; see how they are fleeing to save their lives! And all this calamity because he built his house upon the sand. But the other house, shown in the distance: how firmly that stands! What a bold front it offers to the waves, and how safely it resists the fury of the storm. Its foundations are sure, because they rest upon the solid rock.

Jesus had been teaching the people. He had taught them many wonderful truths, which you will find written in the fifth, sixth, and seventh chapters of Matthew; and in closing He said, "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it." The lesson Jesus sought to impress upon the people by this parable was, that it is not enough simply to hear what He says. Many will do that; but it is only those

who remember Christ's commandments and keep them,
whose work will stand when the time of trial comes.

Healing the Centurion's Servant



Jesus entered into Capernaum, a city by the Sea of Galilee, and while He was there a certain Centurion, or captain in the Roman army, had a favourite servant who was sick of the palsy and in great pain. When this Roman heard of Jesus, he sought the Jewish elders and implored them to go to Christ and beseech Him to cure the sick servant. And the elders came to Jesus and besought Him urgently to do this miracle, saying, "He is a worthy man, this Roman captain, for he loveth the Jews and hath built us a synagogue."

So Jesus went with them, and when He had come near the house, the Centurion himself came to meet Him, saying, "Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter my house. Speak the word only, and this sickness shall depart and my servant be made whole. For I am a man under authority of the Emperor, having many soldiers under me, and I say unto this man, 'Go,' and he goeth; to another, 'Come,' and he cometh, and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he doeth it. Wherefore, if I can so readily command my servants to do my bidding, I know that if Thou biddest this sickness to go out from my servant it will surely go."

Jesus marvelled at the man's words, and said to His followers, "Verily, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in all Israel." And to the Centurion He said, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee."

And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour, and when those that had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant whole that had been sick.

Anointing the Feet of Jesus

On one occasion, a proud Pharisee, whose name was Simon, invited Jesus to eat with him. But the invitation was a cold one. There was no kiss of welcome, no water to bathe His hot and dusty feet, no perfumed ointment for His head: nothing but a bare admission to a vacant place at the table was granted to Jesus. But there He reclined, His left elbow resting on a cushion, and His feet projecting beyond the edge of the couch.

Now it happened that a poor, sinful woman was passing, who, discovering that Jesus was in the house, timidly entered, and stood behind Him. She had an alabaster box of ointment, and, as she looked on Jesus, she wept. Her tears fell upon His feet; so, stooping down, she tenderly wiped them away with her long hair; then she kissed the Saviour's feet, and anointed them with the fragrant ointment. This was done as a token of respect and love.

But an evil eye had noted the kindly act; and the proud Pharisee thought within himself, if Jesus were the prophet He professes to be, He would certainly have known that the woman was a great sinner, and would not have allowed her to touch Him. But Jesus came to save sinners. He loves them, though He hates their sins. He rebuked the haughty Simon; and showed him how he had neglected the commonest rites of hospitality towards his guest, while this poor woman had treated Jesus with the greatest reverence. Then Jesus said,

"Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much"; and He bade her go in peace.

The Rich Fool

There was a certain rich man who owned much land. And his fields and vineyards were so productive that when the time of harvest came, he had not room enough to store his corn and fruits. So after much thought he said, "This will I do. I will pull down my barns and build greater ones, and there will I store all my fruits and my goods. Then I can say to myself, 'I have great store of goods laid up, enough for many years; now I can take mine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.'"

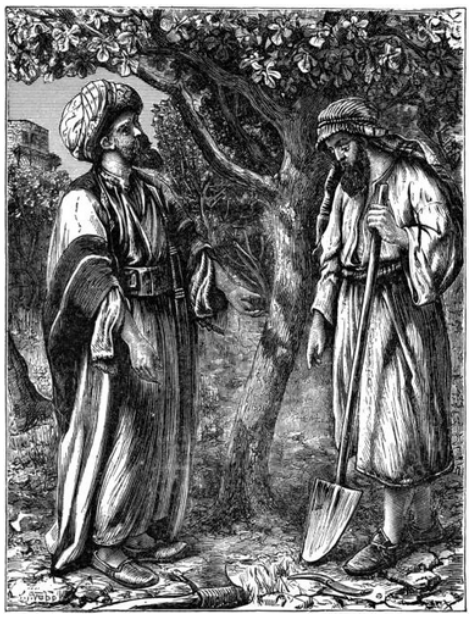
But God said unto him, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast hoarded?"

Jesus says it shall be so with all those who set their minds upon storing up riches in this world, rather than laying up treasures in heaven by pleasing God and working in His service. Death will come when they least expect it, and they will have to leave all their earthly riches, and go where no treasure has been laid up for them.

And He said unto His disciples, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on; for the life is more than meat, and the body more than raiment. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after, and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, for it is the Father's

good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what ye have and give alms; provide yourselves a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, or moth corrupteth."

The Unfruitful Tree



A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, but found none. Then he called to the gardener who attended to his vineyard, and said to him, "Behold these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none. Cut it down. Why does it encumber the ground?"

The gardener answered him and said, "Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it and manure it. And if it bear fruit then, it is well; but if not, then, after that, thou shalt cut it down."

In this parable the vineyard means the world, and the fig-tree ungodly people whose lives do not produce good works - do not produce fruit in the service of God. The Lord of the vineyard, that is, God, would destroy such people, but Christ intercedes in their behalf, that time for repentance may be given. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Christ came and sought to change men's hearts, and make their lives fruitful for God. The warning has been given, and when the Lord of the vineyard comes again to seek good fruit the unfruitful trees shall be destroyed.

Am I a barren tree, dear Lord?
A cumberer of the ground.
Oh! give me grace to fruitful be,
And in Thy work abound.

Sowing the Seed

A sower went out to sow his seed, and as he sowed some fell by the wayside and was trodden down, and birds came and devoured it. And some fell upon a rocky place, where there was not much soil, and as soon as it sprang up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns and weeds, and they sprang up with it and choked it. But other fell on good ground, and sprang up bearing ears, some with thirty, some sixty, some a hundred seeds.

When Jesus had told this parable, His disciples asked Him to explain it to them. He said that the seed is the Word of God. The wayside signifies the people who hear the Word but do not understand it, and Satan comes and takes all thought of it out of their hearts as quickly as the birds devour the seeds. The rocky places without much earth denote those who, when they hear the Word, receive it with great joy and profession of faith; but it never takes deep root in their hearts, and when they are tempted they fall away and the good seed in their hearts is withered up. The thorns and weeds are the pleasures and riches of this life, which root so deeply and strongly in men's hearts that the good seed has no chance, and is soon killed off.

But the good ground is the hearts of good people, who remember God's Word and try, every day of their lives, to do as He wishes us to do, and to live holy and useful lives. The

seed falling upon their hearts becomes strongly rooted and grows up vigorously, bearing good fruit.

What shall be said of your heart, my young friend? Is it like the wayside? the rocky place? the thorny ground? or like a good field that has been well prepared for the seed?

The Enemy Sowing Tares

A certain man sowed good seed in his field, but in the night, whilst men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. When the wheat-blade had sprung up and showed the ear, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came to him and said, "Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? Whence then come these tares?"

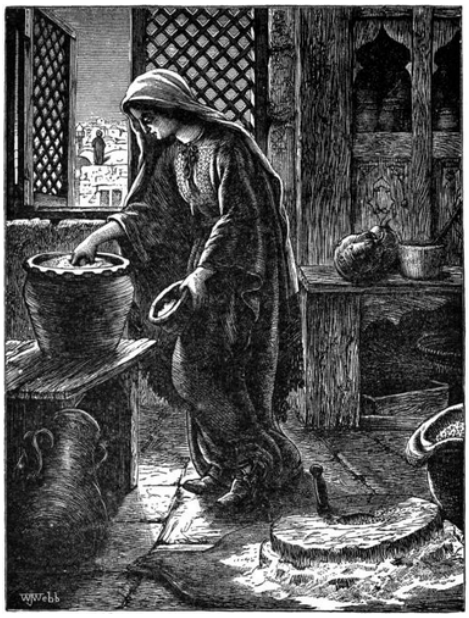
He said unto them, "An enemy hath done this." Then the servants asked, "Shall we go, then, and gather them up?" But he said, "Nay, lest whilst you gather up the tares, you root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, and in that time I will say to the reapers, 'Gather ye together first the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"

Jesus' disciples asked Him to explain this parable to them, and He said: "The field represents the world, and He that sowed the good seed is Christ Himself. The good seed is the Word He preached; the wheat plants are the good people who believe in Christ and do as He teaches. The enemy who sows the bad seed is Satan, and the tares that spring from them are wicked people who follow the promptings of the evil one in their hearts. The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels of God. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world with wicked people. Christ shall send forth His

angels, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend and them that do evil, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

"For the Lord our God shall come,
And shall take His harvest home;
From His field shall in that day
All offences purge away;
"Give His angels charge at last
In the fire the tares to cast,
But the fruitful grain to store
In His garner evermore."

The Parable of the Leaven



Christ said that the kingdom of heaven could be likened unto leaven (or yeast), which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till the whole was leavened.

Now, this leaven, or yeast, is composed of tiny little plants, each one so small that it cannot possibly be seen by the sharpest eye except through a very powerful microscope. So small are they that it would require three thousand of them, placed close together, side by side, to make up the length of one inch. Like all other plants they require food, and they find this in the dough they are placed in. You know that all things are made up of atoms of chemical substances so wonderfully blended together that only the chemist can separate them, and when he has separated them they appear very different. Well, in flour there are certain things so blended, and the yeast-plant takes one kind of substance as food, and in doing so sets free another substance called carbonic acid gas. This gas bubbles up and makes the heavy dough spongy and light. If it were not for these tiny bubbles of gas your bread would be as heavy and close as suet pudding. This is the reason why yeast is put into dough for making bread or cake. One of the most remarkable things about this yeast is, that when it gets into any substance that contains its food, it at once begins to give off buds, which, in a few moments, become full-sized and break away. So rapid is this increase, that if a single yeast-plant were to be put

into a great mass of dough it would very quickly leaven the whole mass.

And so it is with the love of God. When once it gets into our hearts it will keep on growing until all our life is filled with it, and we try in all things to please Him.

Seeking for Hidden Treasure

The people of Canaan, both in ancient and modern days, have made a practice of hiding their treasures. This they have done to secure them in times of danger. When invaders flocked into the land, the people buried their gold and jewels, and fled. And often they died, or were overtaken by their enemies and killed, so that they were unable to return and regain their buried riches. Earthquakes also have taken place, destroying towns and villages, and burying all the riches in them beneath their ruins. Thus there is much hidden treasure in Canaan, and numbers of the inhabitants spend their time seeking diligently and anxiously for it.

Our artist shows us a man who is thus seeking. He has heard that in old times a great treasure was hidden in a particular field. So he digs away patiently in various places until, at last, he finds out that what he heard is quite true. He is sure the treasure is there; and his desire is to become possessed of the field, so that he may obtain the buried riches. He is willing to sell all that he has if by so doing he may buy that field. So he hastens home, and gathers together the whole of his property and sells it. Then he takes his money to the man who has the land for sale, and buys the field of him. Thus he becomes possessed of the treasure he has sought after. Jesus says that the Kingdom of Heaven is like that treasure. It is so precious, that when a man finds out its value, and knows how it can be obtained, he will be willing

to give up everything he has for it - all his companions, pleasures, sins, riches - indeed everything he possesses, in order to gain this great treasure.

The Pearl of Great Price

Very similar to the parable of the Hidden Treasure is this one of the merchant seeking goodly pearls.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."

In the picture we see the merchant on the sea-shore, where he has waited for the landing of these sailors from another country. He asks them if they have any goodly pearls for sale, and one man opens his box and takes out this "pearl of great price." It is just the kind of pearl the merchant had been seeking, so he quickly produces his two bags of gold and offers them to the man for his pearl. But the man smiles. "What! part with so large and so beautiful a pearl for two bags of gold?" He could not think of it. The pearl is again placed in its box, and the merchant has to go away disappointed. But the longing to have that pearl is too great. A thought occurs to him. He will go home and sell all that is his, and the money he shall thus obtain, added to his two bags of gold, will surely buy the precious jewel.

And so it is with men when they seek that pearl of pearls, the forgiveness of God. They will give up a great deal in order to obtain it, but they find that God requires them to give up everything that is sinful or worldly. And if their hearts are really set upon obtaining it, they will do as this merchant did, and part with everything that would hinder

them from coming to God, or walking in the way that leads to heaven.

The Parable of the Net

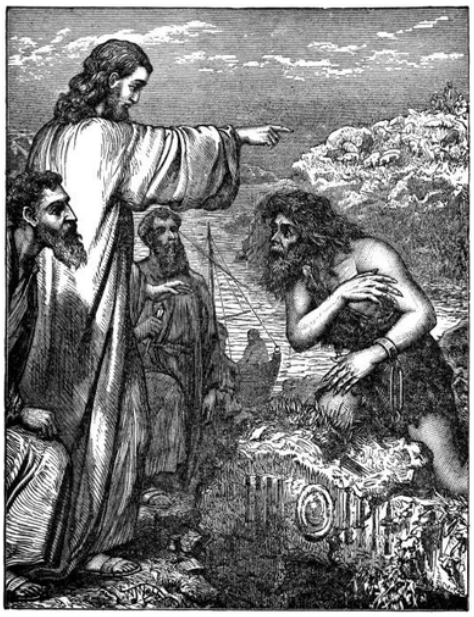
These fishermen have just returned to shore with their net full of fish. Now this is not a casting-net, which is thrown out from the boat and drawn in again, but a drag-net which is of great length, and which is drawn constantly through the water until it is well filled with fish. It is then hauled up to the shore, and the fishermen sit around it, and take out the fish. Many of these, of course, are unfit for food, or not liked. They cast those into the sea again, but the good fish which they can sell for food are carefully placed in vessels brought for the purpose.

Christ said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered every kind (of fish): which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

At another time Jesus taught His disciples the same truth; when He spake of His coming and of the gathering of all nations before Him, the good entering into eternal life, but the wicked being cast away. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory," said Jesus, "and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory. And before Him shall be gathered all nations; and He shall

separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

The Man Possessed by Devils



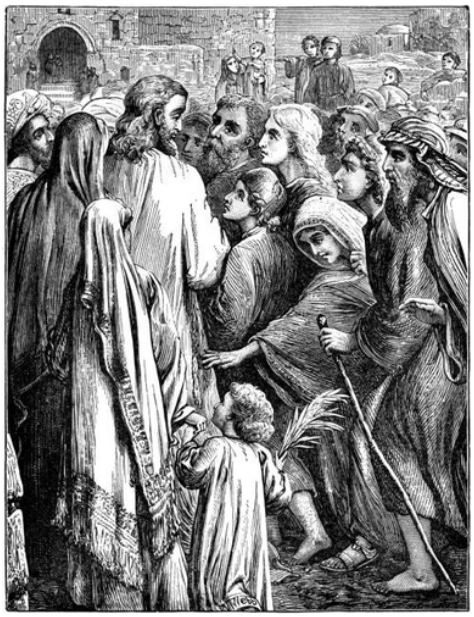
One day Jesus came with His disciples in a boat to the country of the Gadarenes, near Galilee. They landed near the tombs, that is, caverns cut into the rock, where the dead were buried. And there met them a man, who, for a long time, had been possessed by many unclean spirits. He lived in the tombs and wore no clothes. He had been so fierce and wild that his friends had been obliged to chain him up, but he had burst his fetters, and the devils had driven him out to the tombs.

Jesus bade the unclean spirits to come out of the man. And when the man caught sight of Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before Him, saying, "What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God most high? I beseech Thee to torment me not."

And Jesus asked him his name. And he said, "Legion," because many devils were in him. They besought Jesus that He would not make them go into the sea, but would let them enter into a herd of swine that were feeding on the cliffs close by. He suffered them to do so, and the devils went out of the man and entered into the pigs, and the whole herd ran violently over the cliff into the water and were drowned. And when the herdsmen saw what was done, they fled into the city and told all the people. Then the people came out to Jesus, and they saw the man that had been possessed, clothed and in his right mind, sitting at the feet of Jesus. And

they that had seen it told them by what means the man had been healed, and they were afraid. The man out of whom the devils had departed, besought Him that he might stay with Jesus, but He sent him away, saying, "Return to thy house, and show what great things God hath done unto thee." And he went his way and published throughout the city what great things Jesus had done unto him.

Curing the Incurable



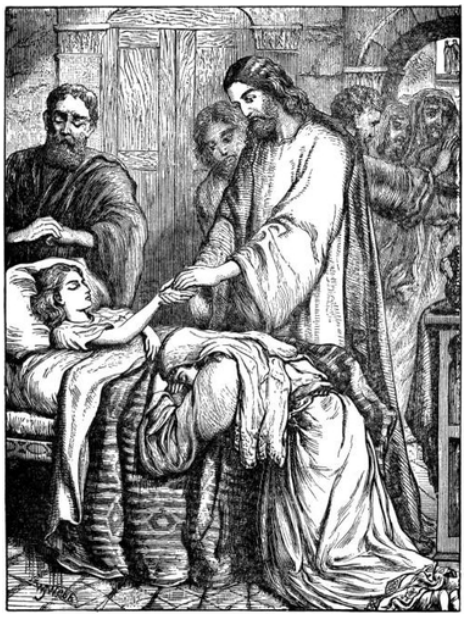
Jesus went into Capernaum, followed by a great crowd of people, and among them was a woman who for twelve years had suffered from a disease which no doctor could cure, though she had consulted many, and spent all her wealth upon them. She had said within herself, "If I could but touch His garment I should be made well." So she pressed through the crowd, and put out her arm and touched the hem of His garment, and immediately she was made well.

Then Jesus, turning round to His disciples, said, "Who touched Me?" But they all denied that they had done so, and Peter and they that were with him said, "Master, the multitude throng Thee and press Thee, and yet Thou sayest, Who touched Me! " They were surprised that Jesus should make such an enquiry, seeing that so many were crowding round Him, and pressing against Him. But Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched Me, for I perceive that healing virtue hath gone out of Me."

When the woman saw that Jesus knew what she had done, and that she could not be hidden in the crowd, she came trembling, and, falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people why she had touched Him, and how she had been healed at once. And He said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. Go in peace, and be healed of thy illness."

Jesus wishes us to trust in Him. We suffer from a terrible disease - the disease of sin, which no doctor can cure; but Jesus will heal us and take away our sin if we trust in Him.

Jairus' Daughter



Jairus was one of the rulers of the Jewish church, or synagogue, and he had a daughter who had been very ill and was now at the point of death. She was an only daughter, and was twelve years of age. So hearing that Jesus was near, he came to Him, and, falling down before Him, implored Jesus to come and see her.

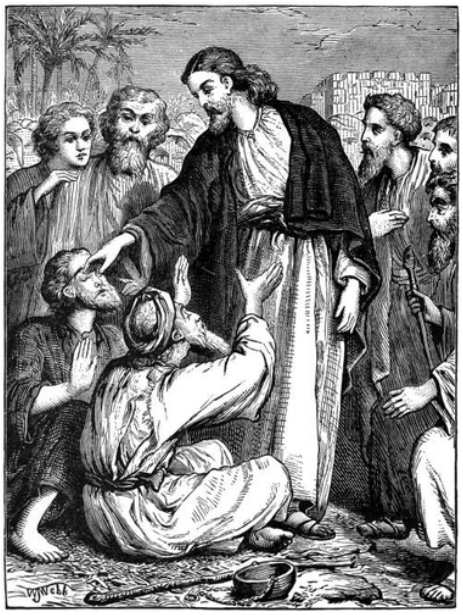
And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did His disciples. Soon there came running to them a messenger from the ruler's house, who said to Jairus, "Thy daughter is already dead; do not trouble the master." But when Jesus heard it He turned to Jairus and said, "Fear not. Only believe, and she shall be restored to life."

When they came to the ruler's house they saw the minstrels and many people who were making much noise and lamentation for the dead girl, as was the custom. Jesus said unto them, "Make way; weep not, for the maiden is not dead, but sleepeth;" but they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out of the room, all but Peter and James and John, and the mother and father of the maiden. Then He took her by the hand, and called to her, saying, "Maid, arise." And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway; and He commanded her parents to give her food.

Her parents were astonished when they saw their daughter raised to life and able to eat, but Jesus charged them that

they should tell no man what He had done. But the fame of the miracle He had wrought went abroad unto all that land.

The Two Blind Men



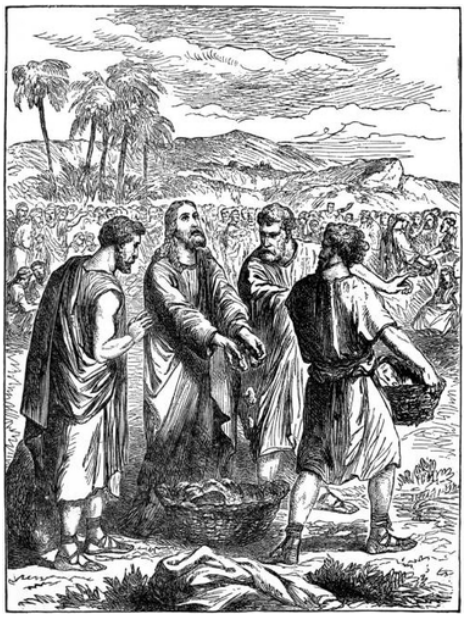
When Jesus had left the house of the ruler Jairus, there followed Him two blind men. They called out to Him, "Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us."

Then Jesus looked at them, and asked if they really believed that He had power to cure them and give them back their sight. And they said unto Him, "Yea, Lord." Then He touched their eyes, and said unto them, "According to your faith, so be it unto you." And immediately they opened their eyes and were able to see. Jesus charged them to let no man know what He had done. But when they were departed they spread His fame abroad over all that country.

Another time Christ and His disciples were coming away from Jericho, followed by a large crowd of people. And there was sitting by the wayside a blind beggar, Bartimeus by name; and when he heard the noise of the multitude, he asked what it meant. They answered him, "Jesus of Nazareth passeth by." Then he cried out in a loud voice, saying, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me." The people tried to keep him from calling out, but he would not be quiet. He was determined that Christ should see him. And Jesus stood still, and commanded them to call him. So he arose and cast away his outer garment and came to Jesus. When Jesus asked what he would have done to him, he answered, "Lord, that I might receive my sight." And Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee

whole." And he received his sight at once, and followed Jesus, praising Him.

Feeding Five Thousand



One day Jesus went on board a ship and sailed to another part of the coast, where He and His disciples might have rest. For the people in the cities crowded them so closely that they did not even have time to eat. They landed, and went into a desert place; but the people had seen them depart, and marked which way the ship sailed. Then they all flocked out of the cities and came on foot to the place where Jesus was. When Jesus saw what a great number of people had come, He had compassion on them, and spoke to them, and healed their sick. But in the evening the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a desert place, and the day has gone; send the people away, that they may go into the villages and buy food."

Jesus was too kind to send them away hungry like that. He said, "They need not depart; give ye them food to eat." But they said to Him, "We have here but five loaves and two fishes, which we have just purchased of a lad." He said, "Bring them to Me." Then He told the people to sit down on the grass; and He took the five loaves and the two fishes, and, looking up to heaven, blessed them and broke them into pieces. The disciples carried the bread and fish to the people and they all ate and had plenty, although there were about five thousand men, besides women and children. And yet, when the disciples took up the fragments that were left, these fragments filled twelve baskets. How kind was Jesus!

He not only taught the people and healed their sick, but He fed them when out in the desert place and hungry.

Christ Walking on the Sea

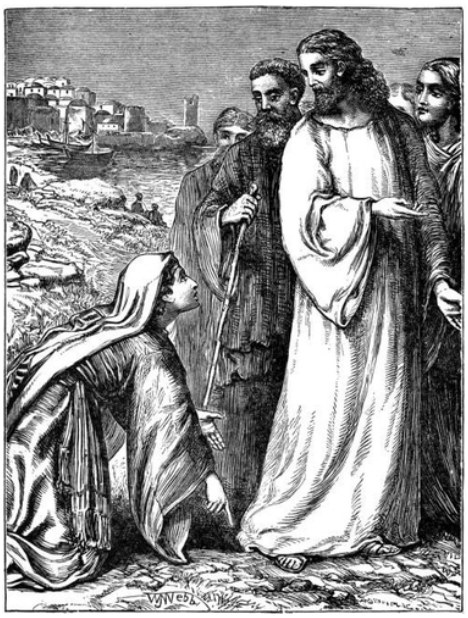
When the people had seen the miracle that Christ did in feeding so many with so few loaves, they felt sure that He was one of the old prophets that had come again, and they would have taken Him by force to make Him king. So He sent His disciples by boat towards Capernaum, and He went, alone, up into a mountain to pray.

When it was dark, the disciples found themselves alone upon the sea, opposed to strong winds, which tossed the boat upon high waves. Then Jesus went out to them, walking upon the waves; but when the disciples saw Him they thought it was a spirit, and cried out with fear. But Jesus said, "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." Peter answered Him, saying, "Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water." And He said, "Come," and Peter stepped over the boat's side and walked on the water towards Christ. But when he saw the angry waves around him and heard the roaring of the winds, Peter was afraid and began to sink. He cried out, "Lord, save me." And Jesus, stretching out His hand, caught him, and said, "O thou of little faith, why didst thou fear?"

When Jesus and Peter had got into the boat, the wind dropped, the sea became calm and the waves still, and immediately they were at the place where they wanted to land. Then they worshipped him, saying, "Truly Thou art the Son of God." And they came into the land of Gennesaret, where the people knew Him and brought to Him all that were

sick, or blind, or lame, that they might touch His garment and be made well.

The Woman of Canaan



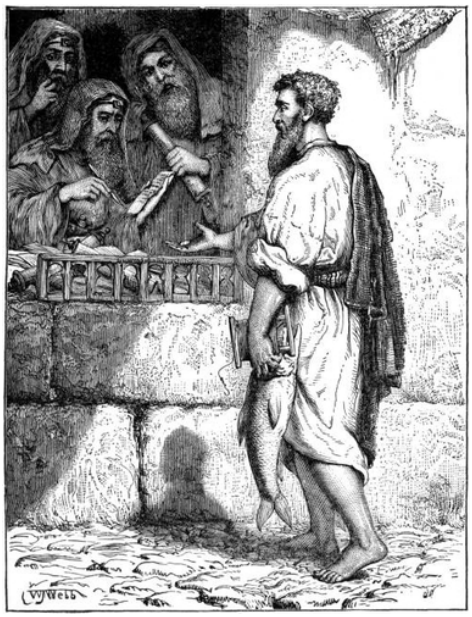
Jesus came unto the borders of Tyre and Sidon, where the people were not Jews, but Gentiles. And there came to Him a woman of Canaan, who cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." She besought Him to cast out this evil spirit from her daughter. But He answered not a word, and His disciples counselled Him to send her away. Then He told her He was not sent unto the Gentiles, but unto the lost sheep of Israel; meaning the Jews. This was said to try her faith. Then she came and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me." But He said, "It is not meet to take the children's food and to cast it to dogs;" meaning that His help was due rather to the Jews than to the Gentiles. And she said, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs sometimes eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table;" meaning that, though she was a Gentile, she believed in Him as the Son of God.

Then Jesus answered, and said unto her, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou desirest. Go thy way; the devil has gone out of thy daughter." And when she was come to her house she found her daughter made whole and laid upon the bed.

Jesus, with His knowledge of our hearts, knew the faith this poor woman had, and tried it so that it might shine the brighter. Then He granted her the blessing she had asked

Him for; and how she must have rejoiced when she reached home and found her daughter quite well and restored to her right mind.

Peter and the Tribute-Money



It was a part of the Jewish law that all strangers passing among the Jews should pay to the priests of the Temple an offering to the Lord, or tribute-money as it was called.

Soon after our Lord's Transfiguration He came to Capernaum, together with His disciples. When they had entered the city, there came to them the priests who usually collected this tribute-money, and they said unto Peter, "Doth not thy Master pay tribute?" And he answered, "Yes." But when they had come to the house, Jesus said to Peter, "What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do they take tribute; of their own people or of strangers?" And Peter answered Him, "Of strangers."

Jesus saith unto him, "Then their own people are free; but lest we should offend them by not paying, go thou down to the sea, and cast in thy hook and line, and take up the first fish that taketh the hook into his mouth. And when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money there. Take it and give it unto the priests as tribute for Me and for thee." And Peter went down to the sea and cast in his line, and took a big fish. And when he had opened its mouth he found the piece of silver, and took it to the men in payment of the tribute.

This tribute was collected to pay the expenses of the Temple worship. Jesus sought to show that, as He himself was the Son of God, the King for whose service the tribute was paid, He might justly be exempted from paying it; yet to save

giving offence He miraculously provided the piece of money to pay tribute for Himself and Peter.

The Good Samaritan

As Jesus was talking to His disciples, a certain lawyer stood up and asked, "Who is my neighbour?" And Jesus answered by telling them this story:

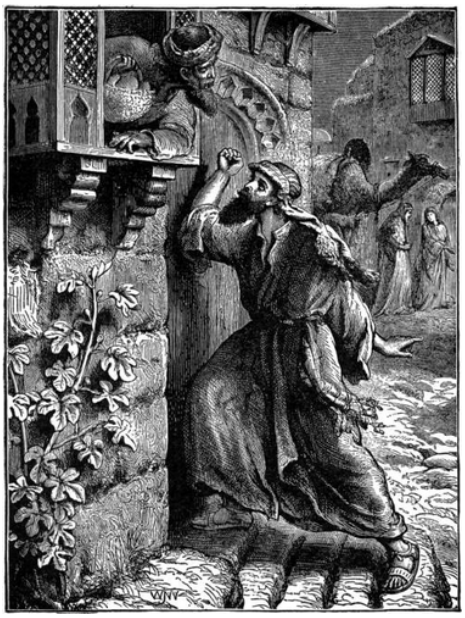
A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who robbed him, stripped him of his clothes, and, wounding him, left him on the road half dead. By chance there came a priest that way, and, as a teacher of religion to men, he should have stopped to help the poor man. Instead of this, he pretended not to see, and passed by on the other side of the road. Then there came by a Levite, who also, as an official of the church, should have given help. But he merely came and looked on the injured man, and passed on the other side as the priest had done.

Afterwards there came by a Samaritan, and, when he caught sight of the wounded Jew, he went over to him and was very sorry for him. Now the Jews hated the Samaritans, and were their enemies, so that it would not have been surprising if he, also, had done as the priest and the Levite did. But, no! Though it was his enemy, he could not pass him by and leave him on the road, perhaps to die. He examined his wounds and bound them up; doing all that he could to soothe them. Then he lifted him carefully on his own beast, and brought him to the nearest inn, and took care of him through the night. The next day, when the Samaritan departed, he paid the man who kept the inn, and said to him, "Take care of this poor man until he is well, and

whatever it may cost for his lodging and food, that I will pay thee when I come again."

"Which of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among thieves?" The lawyer answered, "He that showed mercy unto him." Then said Jesus, "Go, and do thou likewise."

Importunity Rewarded



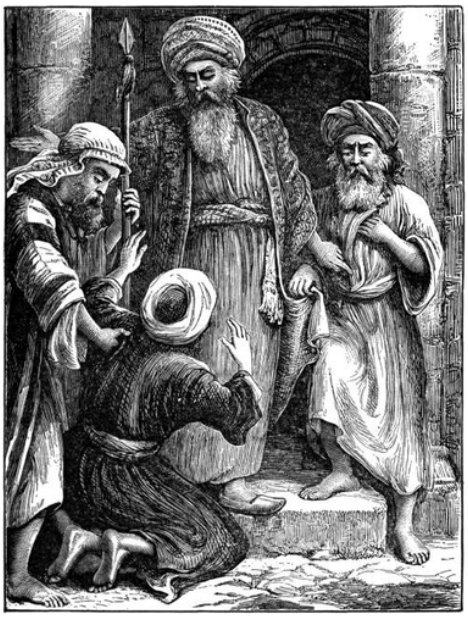
One day Jesus was asked by His disciples to teach them to pray. So Jesus taught them the prayer we all know so well, beginning with "Our Father, which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name." But Jesus told them it was not enough to pray: they must not get tired of praying, even if they failed to receive quickly the things they asked for. They must keep on asking, until God in His own time and manner should grant them what He saw to be good. This great lesson Jesus taught them by the following parable: -

"Which of you shall have a friend," said Jesus, "and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not, the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you," said Jesus, "though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity (continued asking) he will rise and give him as many as he needeth."

Then Jesus told His disciples, and He tells us too, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you." For, said He, "every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened." If we ask for those things that God sees to be good for us, we may certainly expect to

receive them. Let us ask God to keep us every day; and to give us such things as He knows will be for our good.

The Unmerciful Servant



A certain King took account of his servants and began to reckon what they owed him. And there was brought to him one that owed him nearly ten million dollars. But as he had not the money to pay, the King commanded that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and everything that he had, that payment might be made. Then the servant fell down before the King and worshipped him, saying, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." Then the King had compassion on his servant, and loosed him, and forgave him his debt.

But when that servant had gone out from the presence of the King, he found a fellow-servant who owed him a little over fifteen dollars, and he laid hands on him and seized him by the throat, saying, "Pay me that which thou owest." And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet and implored him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." And he would not have patience, but cast his fellow-servant into prison till he should pay the debt.

When his other fellow-servants saw what had been done they were very sorry, and came to their King to tell him all about it. Then the King called the unmerciful servant to him, and said, "O thou wicked servant; I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me. Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?"

And the King was wroth, and delivered him up to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

So likewise, says Christ, shall our Heavenly Father do also unto us if from our hearts we forgive not every one that trespasses against us.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

The Good Shepherd

In one of His beautiful parables, Jesus compares Himself to a shepherd. "I am the good shepherd," says He, "the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." And Jesus tells how the hired servant who cares for nothing but his wages, runs away when the wolf comes; but how the faithful shepherd, when robbers threaten his flock, or wild beasts attack them, defends his sheep bravely, often laying down his life for their sake. Jesus also speaks of how the shepherd knows his sheep by name; and how, when he goes before them, they will follow him, because they know his voice, but that they will not follow strangers. And the Bible, speaking of Jesus Himself, says, "He shall carry the lambs in His bosom," or His arms, like the kind shepherd is doing in our picture.

Now, why does Jesus call Himself the "good shepherd," and the Bible speak of Him as carrying the little lambs? Is it not because He loves us; because He knows each one of us; because He gave His life for us when He died on the cross, and has gone to heaven showing us the way thither; because He calls us to follow Him; and because He is so willing to lead even the tiny ones, and shield them from harm, just like the good shepherd carries the poor wee lamb? But Jesus asks one thing of us in return for all His kindness and care, and that one thing is our love. Are we giving Him our love now? Are we asking Him to lead us, and

keep us safe from harm? May we seek to follow Him and to know His voice.

The Lost Piece of Money

Jesus had been preaching to a crowd of publicans and sinners. The publicans of those days were the collectors of taxes for the Romans, and it was a constant complaint against them that they exacted more from the people than they had any right to do. So they were looked upon as wicked men, although they were not all bad. Now the Scribes and Pharisees, who made a great show of religion, so far as outward forms went, were greatly shocked at seeing Christ sitting with publicans, and said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Then Jesus asked them, "What man of you, if he has a hundred sheep, and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after the lost one, until he has found it? And when he has found it, he lays it upon his shoulders and takes it home, rejoicing; and calls together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.'

"I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.

"Again, what woman if she has ten pieces of money, and loses one, does not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying,

'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece of money which I had lost.'

"Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner that repenteth."

The Prodigal Son

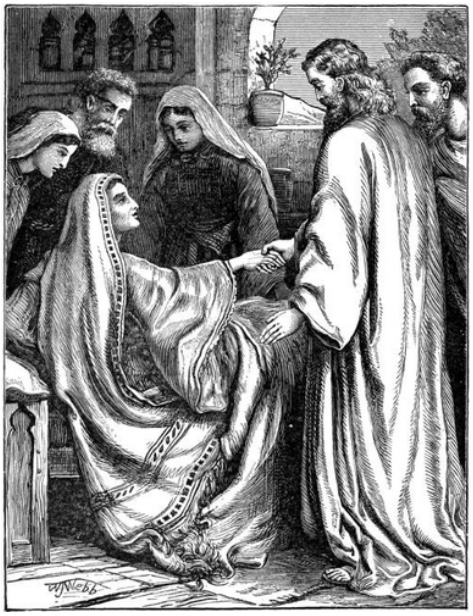
A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the portion of thy wealth that would fall to me at thy death." He did so, and a few days after the younger son gathered all his wealth together and journeyed into a far country. There he met with evil companions, and wasted his money in riotous living. When he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want of bread to eat. So he went and hired himself to a man of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed his pigs. And he was so hungry that he would have been glad to have eaten the coarse food such as the swine eat; but no one gave it to him.

His sufferings brought him to his senses, and he thought how foolish he had been, for he remembered that his father's servants had food enough and to spare, whilst his father's son was perishing with hunger. He said, "I will leave this land and go to my father and tell him how I have sinned against heaven and him. I will tell him I am no longer worthy to be called his son, and will implore him to make me one of his hired servants." And he arose and went towards his father's house, but when he was still a great way off, his father saw him, and was sorry for him, and ran and embraced him. Then he told his father how he had sinned and had lost his title to be called the old man's son, but the father was so glad to have his son come back repentant, that he told his servants to bring the best clothing and a ring to

put on his son. And he made a great feast, and they were merry, for he said, "This is my son that was as one dead to me and is now alive again; he was lost and is found."

But the elder son was very angry, and would not go in to the feast, but said to his father, "Lo, these many years have I served thee, and never offended or disobeyed thee, and thou hast never made a feast for me and my friends; but now this thy other son has come back, that has wasted thy wealth in riotous living, thou hast made a great feast for him." And his father said, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine. It is right that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was as one dead to us and is alive again; he was lost and is found."

Peter's Wife's Mother Cured

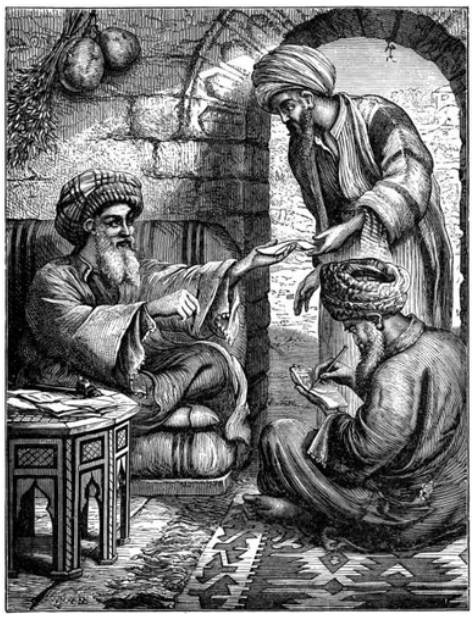


After Jesus had left the Centurion He went to the house of his disciple Peter, and there He saw Peter's wife's mother, laid on a bed, sick with fever. And He took her by the hand and lifted her up. The fever left her and she was cured. She rose up from her bed and attended upon them.

That evening, when the sun was setting, they brought to Jesus all those that were ill, and many that were possessed with devils. And He cast out the devils by His word, and healed all those that were sick.

"At even, ere the sun had set,
The sick, O Lord, around Thee lay;
Oh, in what divers pains they met,
Oh, with what joy they went away! "

The Unjust Steward



See where the steward, worldly wise,
With wicked cunning in his eyes,
Shows his lord's debtors how to cheat
His master of his oil and wheat.
"A hundred measures dost thou owe
Of oil? My friend, 'tis scarcely so:
Here, take thy bill and quick indite
Fifty: that puts the matter right."
"A hundred measures is thy debt
Of corn? My friend, thou dost forget:
Here, take thy bill, and write fourscore;
Surely thou owest nothing more."
Thus wickedly he would provide
Houses in which he might abide,
When for his former acts unjust
He from his stewardship was thrust.
And when his master heard, he smiled,
Though of his goods he was beguiled:
Nor did he e'en forbear to praise
The crafty foresight of his ways.
The children of this world, alas!
The children of the light surpass,
In planning methods to provide
For ills from which they cannot hide.
And so our Master bids us take
The money which He gives, and make
Friends with our riches for the day
When earthly treasures flee away.
That when we leave our house below,
And into unknown regions go,

Through Jesus, we may find above
An everlasting home of love.
Do I my little store expend
For such a wise and prudent end;
Or only think of my own gain,
And not of others' want and pain?
Lord, by Thy Spirit, make me wise
Above my selfishness to rise,
And something daily give away
To find again in Thy great day!

- Richard Wilton, M.A.

The Rich Man and The Beggar

There was a certain rich man who was clothed in rich silks and fine linen, and feasted on costly food each day. There was also a poor beggar, who was ragged and hungry, and covered with sores. His name was Lazarus, and they laid him at the rich man's gate, for he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the well-supplied table. And even the dogs had pity on him, for they came and licked his sores.

And it came to pass that the beggar died, and the angels carried him away to heaven, where he was no longer clothed in rags, but in glorious array. Neither was he hungry, for he sat with Abraham and leaned upon his bosom.

The rich man also died, and was buried. He was not carried to heaven, but went to a place of torment, where he lifted up his eyes, and in the distance saw Abraham with Lazarus on his bosom. And he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in these flames." But Abraham said, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, whilst Lazarus had only evil things; and now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. Beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed."

Then said the rich man, "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren. Let him go to them and testify unto them, that

they may repent, lest they also come into this place of torment." Abraham said unto him, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." And he said, "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." But Abraham said, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."

"Avenge Me of My Adversary"

In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared for man. And in the same city there was a widow that had an enemy, and he had done her an injury. And she came to the judge and implored him, saying, "Give me justice; avenge me of my adversary." But he would not. Then the widow came to him every day and cried, "Give me justice;" but still he would not for a long while. At last he became wearied of her constant cry, and he said within himself, "Though I fear not God nor care for man, yet, because this widow troubleth me with her complaint, I will avenge her; lest by her continual coming she weary me."

And Jesus said, "Hear what the unjust judge saith. And if he, who was an unjust judge and a wicked man, would grant the widow's petition, because she asked so often, will not God, who is good and just, give His children what is good and right for them? Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"

In this parable Jesus impressed upon his disciples the truth that, although great trials might come upon them, and their lives be in peril, yet they were not to lose faith in God, or be disappointed because their prayers were not answered at once. They were to keep on praying; asking God for such things as were right, and trusting that He would preserve them amidst all their enemies; and in His own way make

them to triumph over their foes. Whatever is best for His people, God will give them. He cares for the sparrows, and, even more, for those who love Him.

The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer

The tax-gatherers in those days were called Publicans. They were reputed to be very unjust, exacting from people more than the law required them to pay, and other wickedness was charged against them. Of course, there were good men among them; Saint Matthew was a tax-gatherer before Jesus called him to follow Him. The Pharisees studied the Scriptures and explained them to the people, but they did not follow the teachings of Scripture. They were proud, and pretended they were more religious than other men, but it was only pretense. Jesus compared them to whited sepulchres, and said they were hypocrites, who led the people astray.

A Pharisee and a Publican went up into the Temple to pray. The Pharisee stood in a part of the Temple where all could see him, and prayed thus: "O God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, who are unjust, and who take more than belongs to them. I thank Thee that I am not like this Publican. I fast twice a week; I give to the priests and Levites a tenth part of all I possess." But the Publican, who knew that he was wicked, and felt sorry for it, stood afar off in a quiet part of the Temple where none would see him. He bowed his head and beat upon his breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Jesus said that this Publican went to his home more forgiven than the Pharisee, for every one that is proud and thinks

much of himself shall be put down, and he that humbleth himself and is sorry for his sins, shall be exalted. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth," says Jesus.

The Labourers in the Vineyard

"Go, work within my vineyard's bound,
At eve your 'penny'[1] shall be found:"
So spake the vineyard's lord, and they
Began to toil at break of day.
For hours the sun had shown his face,
When idlers in the market-place
Once and again were sent within
The vineyard's wall their wage to win.
Nay, when but one short hour remains
Before the sun its goal attains,
More loiterers hear the Lord's command
And set to work with willing hand.
The steward came at close of day
Their wage to reckon and to pay;
And they whose toil could scarcely tire,
Received a penny for their hire.
But they who the day's burden bore
And noonday heat, expected more:
And murmur'd that the generous lord
To all one penny should accord.
But he replied, "I wrong not you;
I give you the full wages due;
And why should you my bounty blame,
In paying these beyond their claim?"
Lord, to Thy vineyard Thou dost call
The least, the youngest of us all:
To each Thou dost assign a task,

From each some service Thou dost ask.
How kind such feeble hands to use;
Such pleasant work I needs must choose:
I ask no wages, Lord, from thee,
For Thou hast given Thyself for me.
When I remember all Thy grace,
I cannot loiter in my place:
And when I think of all my sin,
What wages can I hope to win?
Thanks, Lord, if yet my years are few,
And I retain the early dew:
Oh, keep me through the noonday heat,
And cheer me with Thy presence sweet.
For if I have Thy presence, Lord,
'Tis an exceeding great reward;
And if at last I see Thy face,
'Tis not of merit, but of grace.
And, oh, what will that "penny" be
Which Thou wilt then bestow on me?
A glorious image it will bear,
Thy own dear Self, Lord, will be there!

- Richard Wilton, M.A.

[1] The penny, or denarius, was a silver coin, stamped with the image of the Roman Emperor, and worth about 16 cents of our money. It was a full ordinary day's wage at that time.

The Barren Fig-Tree

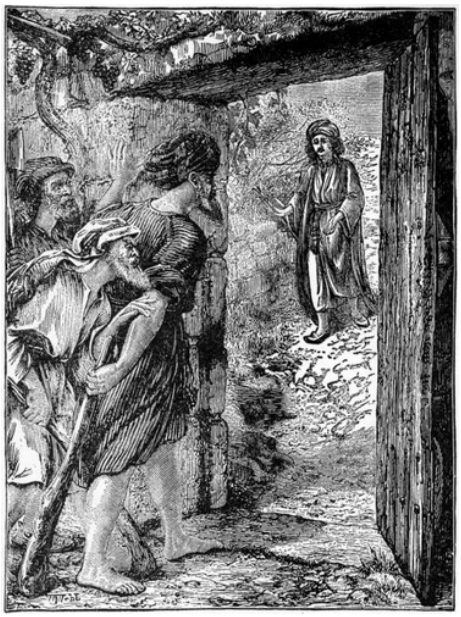
In the morning, when Jesus had left Bethany and was coming towards Jerusalem, He was hungry. Seeing a fig-tree afar off, covered with leaves, He came to it, hoping to find some fruit on it. But the tree was a young one, and had not yet commenced to bear fruit. And He found thereon nothing but leaves. Then He said unto it, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever." And the fig-tree withered away and was dead from the roots. When the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, "How soon the fig-tree is withered away! "

Jesus answered, and said unto them, "Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do as I have done to this fig-tree, but, also, if ye shall say unto this mountain, 'Be thou removed and be cast into the sea,' it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believe that ye will receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye are praying, forgive any that have injured you, that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses against Him. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."

How strange it seems that Jesus, who was gentle and kind, should pronounce a curse on this fig-tree, and cause it to wither away. Why did He do so? Because He wished to impress upon His disciples the terrible danger of

unfruitfulness. If we are the disciples of Jesus, we must bear good fruit; we must be loving, kind, and gentle, and try, like Him, to be always doing good.

The Wicked Husbandmen



One day when the priests and elders of the Temple were asking questions of Jesus, He told them this parable.

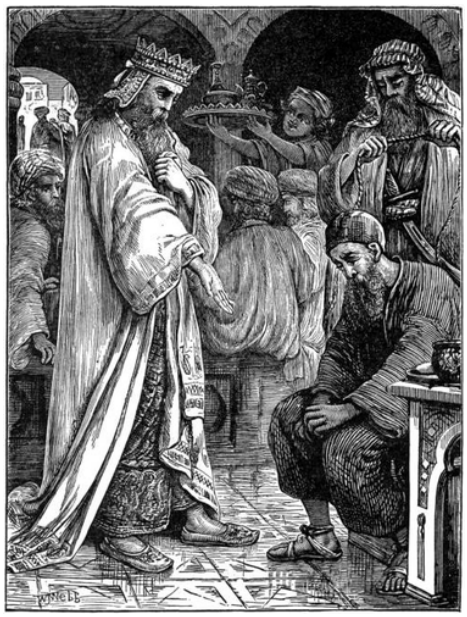
There was a certain man who had a vineyard which was hedged or walled round, and had a tower. But he was going away into a country far off, so he let the vineyard to a number of husbandmen, or labourers, who were to give him part of the fruit of the vines. When the time had come that the fruit was ripe, he sent his servants to the husbandmen that he might receive his share. But the wicked husbandmen took his servants, and slew one, and beat another, and stoned the third. Then he sent other servants, more than before, but the husbandmen served them as they had done the others. Last of all he sent his own son, saying, "They will reverence my son." But when those wicked men saw him coming, they said among themselves, "This is the heir to all the vineyard; come, let us kill him and seize on his inheritance." So they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.

Then Jesus said to the priests and elders, "When the Lord of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen?" And they answered, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard to others, who shall render him the fruits in their season."

In this parable the owner of the vineyard means God; the vineyard Canaan, and the husbandmen are the Jews, who had promised to obey Him, but had not done so. He had sent

His prophets among them, to warn them, but these had been killed. At last He sent His only Son, but they would not own Him as such, and soon they would kill Him. When the priests heard this they knew it referred to them, and they were very angry and would have taken Him and killed Him, but they were afraid of the people, who took Jesus to be a prophet.

The Wedding Garment

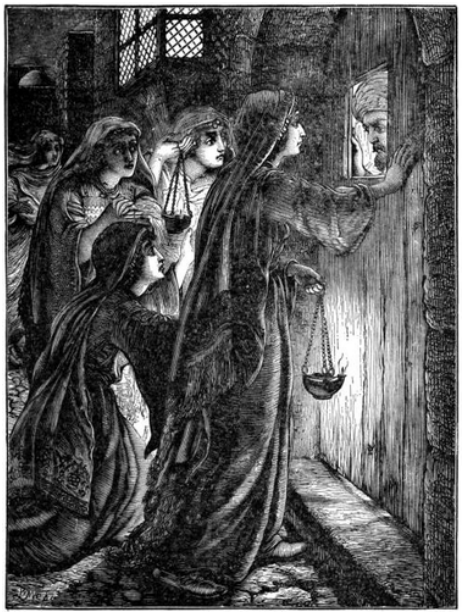


There was a certain King who gave a great feast upon the occasion of his son's wedding. And he sent out his servants to bring in those that had been invited, but they would not come. Then he sent forth other servants, saying, "Tell them which were bidden, 'Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready. Come unto the feast.'" But they made light of the message and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his warehouse; others took the servants and slew them.

When the King heard what had been done, he was very angry, and sent out his army to destroy the murderers, and burn up their city. Then said he to the servants, "The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and all ye shall find, bid them come to the marriage." So they gathered together as many as they could find. And upon each one, as he entered the house, was put a beautiful marriage garment, which the King had prepared. But when the people were all seated, and the King had entered the house, he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment, and he said unto him, "Friend, how camest thou in hither without a wedding garment?" And the man was speechless, for the garment had been offered to him at first, but he had refused it. Then said the King to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away and cast him into outer darkness."

In this parable, the King means God, who gave the feast for His Son, Jesus Christ. Those who were first asked were the Jews, who refused to believe in Christ. Those who were afterwards brought in, signify the people who have since listened to His Word, and believed in Him. The one without the wedding garment is any one that pretends to accept the invitation to be one of God's people, but in his heart does not believe in Christ.

The Foolish Virgins



In certain parts of the East it is the custom for a man when he is married to bring home his bride at night, and for his relatives and friends to go out with lamps and torches and music to meet him.

Ten young women had been invited to meet the bridegroom with their lamps burning and to sit down with him at the wedding-feast. Five of them were wise and five were foolish. The wise ones took a supply of oil in case their lamps should burn out before the bridegroom arrived; the foolish five took no oil but what was in their lamps. But before the bridegroom came they all fell asleep.

At midnight there was a cry, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." But five lamps had almost burnt out, and the foolish virgins said unto the wise, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." But the wise ones answered, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and for you. Go ye, rather, to them that sell, and buy for yourselves." And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage-feast, and the door was shut.

Afterwards, came also the other virgins, saying, "Lord, Lord, open the door to us." But he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not," and would not open the door to them.

In this parable the bridegroom means Jesus returning to earth, on the Day of Judgment. The ten virgins are the people of this world, some of whom have their hearts full of the love of God and keep their lamps burning with a steady and bright light; that is, they fulfill God's commandments and obey the teachings of Christ. The others have not this love in their hearts, and are not prepared for Christ's coming. Their lamps give out a feeble light and soon will go out.

The Parable of the Talents

One day Jesus told His disciples this parable or story.

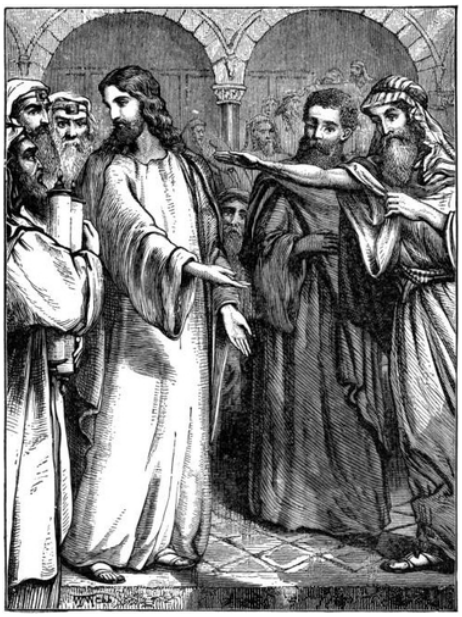
A certain nobleman was called away to a far country to be appointed king of it, and to return after a time. And he called his servants unto him, and charged them with the care of his goods and treasure, giving to each man according to his ability to use the same. To one servant he gave five talents, to another two, and to another only one. And straightway he left them, and departed upon his journey. Then the man that had five talents went and traded with them, and did so well that in time the profits amounted to five talents more, making ten altogether. And he that had received two talents, also traded with his, and added two other talents to them by way of profit. But he that had had but one talent went away and covered it up in a cloth and hid it away.

After a long time the nobleman came back and called his servants to him, and asked them for the treasure he had entrusted to their keeping. And he that had received five talents, brought ten, and said, "Lord, behold, I have gained five other talents beside them." And his lord said, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. Enter thou into the joy of thy lord." And to him that had two talents, and brought back four, the lord said the same words. Then came he that had received but one talent and had hid it; and he said, "Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man,

reaping where thou hast not sown, and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent, and lo, here thou hast that which is thine." His lord said unto him, "Thou wicked and slothful servant. Thou knewest that I reaped where I had not sown; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money in the bank, that I might have received mine own with interest for its use. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him that hath ten; and take the unprofitable servant and cast him into the outer darkness."

Now the talent here mentioned was an eastern sum of money (nearly one thousand dollars), but it really means the powers and opportunities for doing good that God has given to all of us. One day we shall all be called upon to give an account of the talents entrusted to our keeping, and woe be to those who have abused their stewardship by hiding their talent away. But those who have done good, according to the power and opportunity given to them, shall be received into everlasting joy by Christ the Lord.

Man with the Withered Hand



One Sabbath-day Jesus went into the synagogue, and there He saw a man that had a withered hand. By some means the muscles had lost their power, and he could neither use his hand nor stretch it out. And the Pharisees watched Jesus, to see if He would heal this man on the Sabbath, that they might bring a charge against Him of breaking the law. They asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day?" and He replied by asking who among them, if he had a sheep which had fallen into a pit on the Sabbath-day, would not lay hold on it, and lift it out. "How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day."

Then said He to the man, "Stretch forth thine hand." And he stretched it forth, and it was made whole and healthy like the other.

Then the Pharisees went out and held a council against Him, to consider how they might destroy Him; but when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from that part, and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.

Jesus Ascends to Heaven

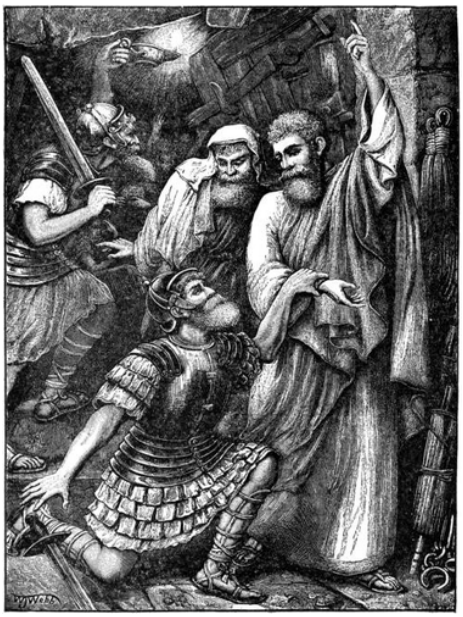
Jesus had been cruelly put to death. His hands, which had been placed on the heads of little children when He blessed them, had been nailed to a cross of wood; and cruel nails had been driven through his feet. And hanging on the cross, Jesus had died. But on the third day He had risen from the tomb, and for forty days He had remained upon the earth, meeting frequently with His disciples. At the end of that time Jesus led the eleven apostles from Jerusalem towards Bethany; and when near that village, and away from the multitude, He spoke to them, promising that they should be made bold by the Holy Spirit, and receive power to witness for Him both to the Jews and Gentiles. Then, the Bible tells us, "He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." And as He went up, a cloud received Him out of their sight.

The apostles fell down and worshipped Jesus, looking steadfastly after Him as He went up; and as they did so, two angels in white garments stood by them, and said, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Then the apostles returned to Jerusalem.

Yes, Jesus has ascended to heaven, and now He sits at the right hand of God; but He tells us that He will come again,

and take those that love Him to dwell with Him in His glorious home for ever and ever. "I go to prepare a place for you," Jesus says.

The Philippian Jailer



Paul and Silas were in prison. They had done no wrong, but wicked men had taken them before the magistrates; and the magistrates had caused them to be severely beaten, and afterwards had sent them to prison, where they were securely fastened in an inner dungeon, and their feet made fast in the stocks. This was a most painful position for Paul and Silas. But they were not unhappy. They prayed to God, and sang praises to Him; and they sang so heartily that the other prisoners heard them. It was midnight, and all was dark in the prison. But suddenly there was an earthquake; so that the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and every one's bonds were loosed. All the prisoners might have run away had they been minded to do so.

The keeper of the prison had been sleeping, but the earthquake awoke him. When he saw the doors open, he supposed that all the prisoners had fled; and knowing how severely he would be punished on that account, he drew his sword to kill himself. Paul knew this, and called out loudly, "Do thyself no harm, for we are all here." Then the keeper, who but a little while before had cruelly treated Paul and Silas, came trembling, and fell down before them, and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" He was afraid because of his sins; and wanted to know how he might be saved from the fearful consequences of sin. Paul's answer was, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Then Paul

and Silas spoke to him about Jesus. He believed, and was baptized; and the next morning the two disciples were set at liberty.

Timothy and His Mother Eunice

Timothy was a youthful and earnest disciple of Jesus Christ, whom Paul loved dearly. Paul had found him during one of his missionary journeys, and, discovering how highly he was esteemed as a Christian, had selected him as his assistant. Afterward Timothy became Paul's companion in travel, and the first bishop of Ephesus. While Timothy was at Ephesus, Paul wrote two letters to him. They are contained in the Bible, and are called the Epistles to Timothy. In them Paul says many kind and wise things, giving Timothy directions how to act in his high Christian office. But Paul also speaks of Timothy's early days, and of his mother and grandmother. These were both good women, who loved God, and diligently studied the Holy Scriptures. The mother's name was Eunice. She was Jewish. The grandmother's name was Lois. Both loved the little boy Timothy, or Timotheus as he was called, and they sought to instill into his young mind and heart the love of God and the knowledge of His holy Word. In our picture we see Eunice teaching her son. She has not a bound Bible, but a manuscript, wound round small rollers. From this she reads to Timothy; while Lois, the aged grandmother, sits by.

Paul warned Timothy not to forget the teaching of his good mother and grandmother; and especially to value his knowledge of the Scriptures. Because, said Paul, "they are able to make thee wise unto salvation." Many young folks have good mothers and grandmothers, who love to teach

them about Jesus. Are they receiving this teaching as Timothy did, and being made wise unto salvation?

Christ Blessing the Children

Jesus had left Galilee, and was journeying toward Jerusalem, where He was to be put to death. He was in the country beyond Jordan, called Peræa, and had been speaking some very wise words to the Pharisees, and also to His disciples, when some women came to Him, bringing infants and young children that He might put His hands upon them and pray for them. The disciples thinking probably that Jesus, who had so many important things to attend to, would not wish to be troubled by women bringing their children, rebuked them for so doing. But Jesus loved children. So, when He saw the disciples about to send them away, He was displeased; and, calling the disciples to Him, He said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God." Then, we are told, Jesus "took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." How kind was Jesus! and how willing that the little ones should be brought to Him! And He is the same now. May all our young readers learn to love Him, and find for themselves how willing He is to love and bless them.

About This EBook

The text of these files, the cover image, and most illustrations were taken from the books *Mother Stories from the Old Testament* and *Mother Stories from the Old Testament*. The author of the stories is not listed, but it was published by the Henry Altemos Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The image of Adam and Eve is a detail of a stained glass window of the expulsion from the Garden of Eden by Atelier Lorin, 1887. The window is in the Church of Saint-Aignan in Chartres, France; it was photographed on 22 January 2011 by Reinhardhauke, and the image swiped from Wikimedia Commons.

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